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The World's Classics

CLXXXVII
SELECTED POEMS
OF SHELLEY

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
AMEN HOUSE, F.C. 4
London, Liverpool, Glasgow
New York, Toronto, Melbourne
Capetown, Bombay, Calcutta
Madras, Singapore
HUMPHREY MILLORD
PUBLISHERS TO THE
UNIVERSITY

SELECTED POEMS OF
PERCY BYSSHE
SHELLEY



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Born, Warnham, Sussex . . . August 4, 1792
Died, at Sea, off Leghorn . . . July 8, 1822

*The present volume of selections was first published in
'The World's Classics' in 1913, and reprinted in 1921,
1924, 1929, and 1935.*

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THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

A FRAGMENT

PART I

Nec tantum prodere vati,
Quantum scire licet. Venit aetas omnis in unam
Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot saecula pectus.
LUOAN, *Phars.* v. 176.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep !
One pale as yonder wan and hornèd moon,
With lips of lurid blue,
The other glowing like the vital morn,
When throned on ocean's wave
It breathes over the world :
Yet both so passing strange and wonderful !

Hath then the iron-sceptred Skeleton,
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres, 10
To the hell dogs that couch beneath his throne
Cast that fair prey ? Must that divinest form,
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, whose azure veins
Steal like dark streams along a field of snow,
Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
In light of some sublimest mind, decay ?
Nor putrefaction's breath
Leave aught of this pure spectacle
But loathsomeness and ruin ?— 20
Spare aught but a dark theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize ?
Or is it but that dowry-wingèd slumbers
Have charmed their nurse coy Silence near her lids

To watch their own repose ?
Will they, when morning's beam
Flows through those wells of light,
Seek far from noise and day some western cave,
Where woods and streams with soft and pausing winds
A lulling murmur weave ?— 30
Lanthe doth not sleep
The dreamless sleep of death :
Nor in her moonlight chamber silently
Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,
Or mark her delicate cheek
With interchange of hues mock the broad moon,
Outwatching weary night,
Without assured reward.
Her dewy eyes are closed ;
On their translucent lids, whose texture fine 40
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn below
With unapparent fire,
The baby Sleep is pillowed :
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Twining like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark ! whence that rushing sound ?
'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
Around a lonely ruin 50
When west winds sigh and evening waves respond
In whispers from the shore :
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Which from the unseen lyres of dells and groves
The genii of the breezes sweep.
Floating on waves of music and of light,
The chariot of the Daemon of the World
Descends in silent power :
Its shape reposed within : slight as some cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of day 60
When evening yields to night,
Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
Its transitory robe.

Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light
Check their unearthly speed ; they stop and fold

 Their wings of braided air :

The Daemon leaning from the ethereal car

 Gazed on the slumbering maid.

Human eye hath ne'er beheld

70

A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,

As that which o'er the maiden's charmed sleep

 Waving a starry wand,

 Hung like a mist of light.

Such sounds as breathed around like odorous winds

 Of wakening spring arose,

Filling the chamber and the moonlight sky.

Maiden, the world's supremest spirit

 Beneath the shadow of her wings

Folds all thy memory doth inherit

80

 From ruin of divinest things,

 Feelings that lure thee to betray,

 And light of thoughts that pass away.

For thou hast earned a mighty boon,

 The truths which wisest poets see

Dimly, thy mind may make its own,

 Rewarding its own majesty,

 Entranced in some diviner mood

 Of self-oblivious solitude.

Custom, and Faith, and Power thou spurnest ;

90

 From hate and awe thy heart is free ;

Ardent and pure as day thou burnest,

 For dark and cold mortality

 A living light, to cheer it long,

 The watch-fires of the world among.

Therefore from nature's inner shrine,

 Where gods and fiends in worship bend,

Majestic spirit, be it thine

 The flame to seize, the veil to rend,

 Where the vast snake Eternity

100

 In charmed sleep doth ever lie.

4 THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

All that inspires thy voice of love,
 Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
 Or through thy frame doth burn or move,
 Or think or feel, awake, arise !
 Spirit, leave for mine and me
 Earth's unsubstantial mimicry !

It ceased, and from the mute and moveless frame

 A radiant spirit arose,
 All beautiful in naked purity. 110
 Robed in its human hues it did ascend,
 Disparting as it went the silver clouds,
 It moved towards the car, and took its seat
 Beside the Daemon shape.

Obedient to the sweep of æery song,

 The mighty ministers
 Unfurled their prismatic wings.
 The magic car moved on ;
 The night was fair, innumerable stars
 Studded heaven's dark blue vault ; 120
 The eastern wave grew pale
 With the first smile of morn.

 The magic car moved on.
 From the swift sweep of wings
 The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew ;
 And where the burning wheels
 Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
 Was traced a line of lightning.

Now far above a rock the utmost verge
 Of the wide earth it flew, 130
 The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
 Frowned o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
 Calm as a slumbering babe,
 Tremendous ocean lay.

Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
 The pale and waning stars,
 The chariot's fiery track,

And the grey light of morn
Tingeing those fleecy clouds
140 That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
The chariot seemed to fly
Through the abyss of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

As they approached their goal,
The winged shadows seemed to gather speed.
The sea no longer was distinguished ; earth
150 Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere, suspended
In the black concave of heaven
With the sun's cloudless orb,
Whose rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
160 The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens,
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems widely rolled,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever varying glory.

It was a sight of wonder ! Some were horned,
And like the moon's argentine crescent hung
In the dark dome of heaven ; some did shed
A clear mild beam like Hesperus, while the sea
Yet glows with fading sunlight ; others dashed
170 Athwart the night with trains of bickering fire,
Like spherèd worlds to death and ruin driven ;
Some shone like stars, and as the chariot passed
Bedimmed all other light.

Spirit of Nature ! here
In this interminable wilderness

Of worlds, at whose involved immensity
 Even soaring fancy staggers,
 Here is thy fitting temple.
 Yet not the lightest leaf
 That quivers to the passing breeze
 Is less instinct with thee,—
 Yet not the meanest worm,
 That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead,
 Less shares thy eternal breath.
 Spirit of Nature! thou
 Imperishable as this glorious scene,
 Here is thy fitting temple.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the shore of the immeasurable sea, 190
 And thou hast lingered there
 Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the fiery line of ocean,
Thou must have marked the braided webs of gold
 That without motion hang
 Over the sinking sphere :
Thou must have marked the billowy mountain clouds,
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
 Towering like rocks of jet
 Above the burning deep : 200
 And yet there is a moment
 When the sun's highest point
Peers like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam
Like fairy lands girt by some heavenly sea :
Then has thy rapt imagination soared
Where in the midst of all existing things
The temple of the mightiest Daemon stands.

Yet not the golden islands
That gleam amid yon flood of purple light,
Nor the feathery curtains
That canopy the sun's resplendent couch,
Nor the burnished ocean waves

Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As the eternal temple could afford.
The elements of all that human thought
Can frame of lovely or sublime, did join
To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
Of earth may image forth its majesty. 220
Yet likest evening's vault that faery hall,
As heaven low resting on the wave it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome ;
And on the verge of that obscure abyss
Where crystal battlements o'erhang the gulf
Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
Their lustre through its adamantine gates.

The magic car no longer moved ;
The Daemon and the Spirit 230
Entered the eternal gates.
Those clouds of æry gold
That slept in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy,
With the ethereal footsteps trembled not ;
While slight and odorous mists
Floated to strains of thrilling melody
Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines.

The Daemon and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement. 240
Below lay stretched the boundless universe !
There, far as the remotest line
That limits swift imagination's flight,
Unending orbs mingled in mazy motion,
Immutably fulfilling
Eternal Nature's law.
Above, below, around,
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony,
Each with undeviating aim 250
In eloquent silence through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.—

Awhile the Spirit paused in ecstasy.
 Yet soon she saw, as the vast spheres swept by,
 Strange things within their belted orbs appear.
 Like animated frenzies, dimly moved
 Shadows, and skeletons, and fiendly shapes,
 Thronging round human graves, and o'er the dead
 Sculpturing records for each memory
 In verse, such as malignant gods pronounce, 260
 Blasting the hopes of men, when heaven and hell
 Confounded burst in ruin o'er the world:
 And they did build vast trophies, instruments
 Of murder, human bones, barbaric gold,
 Skins torn from living men, and towers of skulls
 With sightless holes gazing on blinder heaven,
 Mitres, and crowns, and brazen chariots stained
 With blood, and scrolls of mystic wickedness,
 The sanguine codes of venerable crime.
 The likeness of a thronèd king came by, 270
 When these had passed, bearing upon his brow
 A threefold crown; his countenance was calm,
 His eye severe and cold; but his right hand
 Was charged with bloody coin, and he did gnaw
 By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart
 Concealed beneath his robe; and motley shapes,
 A multitudinous throng, around him knelt,
 With bosoms bare, and bowed heads, and false looks
 Of true submission, as the sphere rolled by.
 Brooking no eye to witness their foul shame, 280
 Which human hearts must feel, while human tongues
 Tremble to speak, they did rage horribly,
 Breathing in self-contempt fierce blasphemies
 Against the Daemon of the World, and high
 Hurling their armed hands where the pure Spirit,
 Serene and inaccessibly secure,
 Stood on an isolated pinnacle,
 The flood of ages combating below,
 The depth of the unbounded universe
 Above, and all around 290
 Necessity's unchanging harmony.

ALASTOR

OR

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

PREFACE

THE poem entitled *Alastor* may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men.

The Poet's self centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

‘ The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
Burn to the socket ! ’

December 14, 1815.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quaerebam quid
amarem, amans amare.—*Confess. St. August.*

EARTH, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood !
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine ;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,

And solemn midnight's tingling silentness ;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs ;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me ;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred ; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now !

Mother of this unfathomable world !
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only ; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge : . . . and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noon-day thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain

May modulate with murmurs of the air
And motions of the forests and the sea.
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness :—
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep :—
Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh :
He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses. 70
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men, 80
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies

Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their stony domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ample majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts when'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatso'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
Dark Aethiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble daemons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day

Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the Moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent, 130
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps :—
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love :—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose : then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie 140
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aerial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet 150
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woor and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy, 160

Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire : wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath 170
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly. 180
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom : . . . she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision ; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course, 190
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight ? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,

The joy, the exultation ? His wan eyes 200
 Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
 As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
 The spirit of sweet human love has sent
 A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
 Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
 Beyond the realms of dream that *fleeting shade* ;
 He overleaps the bounds. Alas ! Alas !
 Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
 Thus treacherously ? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
 In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep, 210
 That beautiful shape ! Does the dark gate of death
 Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
 O Sleep ? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
 And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
 Lead only to a black and watery depth,
 While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
 Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
 Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
 Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms ?
 This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart, 220
 The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
 His brain even like despair.

While daylight held

The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
 With his still soul. At night the passion came,
 Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
 And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
 Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
 In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
 Burn with the poison, and precipitates
 Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
 Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight 231
 O'er the wide æry wilderness : thus driven
 By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
 Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
 Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
 Startling with careless step the moonlight snake,
 He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
 Shedding the mockery of its vital hues

Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep 240
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud ;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean ; his scattered hair
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind ; his listless hand 250
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin ;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet 260
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career : the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times ; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path 270
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasman shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings

Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
 High over the immeasurable main.
 His eyes pursued its flight.—‘Thou hast a home, 280
 Beautiful bird; thou voyagest to thine home,
 Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
 With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
 Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
 And what am I that I should linger here,
 With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
 Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
 To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
 In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
 That echoes not my thoughts?’ A gloomy smile 290
 Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
 For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
 Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
 Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
 With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.
 There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
 Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
 A little shallop floating near the shore
 Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze. 300
 It had been long abandoned, for its sides
 Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
 Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
 A restless impulse urged him to embark
 And meet lone Death on the drear ocean’s waste;
 For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
 The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
 Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
 Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
 Following his eager soul, the wanderer 311
 Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
 On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
 And felt the boat speed o’er the tranquil sea
 Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
 Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
 Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
 Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
 The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on, 320
 With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
 Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
 The waves arose. Higher and higher still
 Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's
 scourge

Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
 Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
 Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
 Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
 With dark obliterating course, he sate :
 As if their genii were the ministers 330
 Appointed to conduct him to the light
 Of those belovèd eyes, the Poet sate
 Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
 The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
 High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
 That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
 Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
 Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
 O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
 Night followed, clad with stars. On every side 340
 More horribly the multitudinous streams
 Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
 Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
 The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
 Still fled before the storm ; still fled, like foam
 Down the steep cataract of a wintry river ;
 Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave ;
 Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
 That fell, convulsing ocean : safely fled—
 As if that frail and wasted human form, 350
 Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
 The moon arose : and lo ! the ethereal cliffs
 Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone

Among the stars like sunlight, and around
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
 Bursting and eddying irresistibly
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save ?—
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
 The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
 The shattered mountain overhung the sea, 360
 And faster still, beyond all human speed,
 Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
 The little boat was driven. A cavern there
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
 Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
 With unrelaxing speed.—‘ Vision and Love ! ’
 The Poet cried aloud, ‘ I have beheld
 The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
 Shall not divide us long ! ’

The boat pursued
 The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone 370
 At length upon that gloomy river’s flow ;
 Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
 Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
 The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
 Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
 Ere yet the flood’s enormous volume fell
 Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
 That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
 Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm ;
 Stair above stair the eddying waters rose, 380
 Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
 With alternating dash the gnarled roots
 Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
 In darkness over it. In the midst was left,
 Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
 A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
 Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
 With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
 Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
 Till on the verge of the extremest curve, 390
 Where, through an opening of the rocky bank.

The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
 Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
 Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
 Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
 Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
 Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
 Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded
 sail,

And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks
 Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream, 400
 Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark!
 The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
 With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
 Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
 A little space of green expanse, the cove
 Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
 For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
 Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
 Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
 Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind, 410
 Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
 Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
 To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
 But on his heart its solitude returned,
 And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
 In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame
 Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
 Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
 Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
 Of night close over it.

The noonday sun 420
 Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
 Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
 A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
 Scooped in the dark base of their aery rocks
 Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
 The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
 Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
 By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
 He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,

Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark 430
 And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
 Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
 Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
 Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
 Most solemn domes within, and far below,
 Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
 The ash and the acacia floating hang
 Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
 In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
 Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around 440
 The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
 With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
 Fold their beams round the hearts of those that
 love,

These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
 Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
 Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
 And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
 As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
 Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
 Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
 Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen 451
 Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
 A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
 To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
 Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
 Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
 Like vaporous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
 Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
 Images all the woven boughs above,
 And each depending leaf, and every speck 460
 Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
 Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
 Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
 Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
 Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
 Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
 Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
 Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
 Their own wan light through the reflected lines 470
 Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
 Of that still fountain ; as the human heart,
 Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
 Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
 The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
 Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
 An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
 Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
 Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
 To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes 480
 Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
 Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
 Of grace, or majesty, or mystery ;—
 But, undulating woods, and silent well,
 And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
 Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
 Held commune with him, as if he and it
 Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
 Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,
 Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought, 490
 And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
 To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
 That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
 The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
 Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
 Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
 Among the moss with hollow harmony
 Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
 It danced ; like childhood laughing as it went :
 Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
 Reflecting every herb and drooping bud 501
 That overhung its quietness.—‘O stream !
 Whose source is inaccessiblely profound,
 Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?
 Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
 Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,

Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
 Have each their type in me : and the wide sky,
 And measureless ocean may declare as soon
 What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud 510
 Contains thy waters, as the universe
 Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
 Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
 I' the passing wind !'

 Beside the grassy shore
 Of the small stream he went ; he did impress
 On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
 Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
 Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
 Of fever, he did move ; yet, not like him,
 Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame 520
 Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
 He must descend. With rapid steps he went
 Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
 Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now
 The forest's solemn canopies were changed
 For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
 Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
 The struggling brook : tall spires of windlestrae
 Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
 And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines 530
 Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
 The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
 Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
 The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
 And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
 Had shone, gleam stony orbs :—so from his steps
 Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
 Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
 And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
 The stream, that with a larger volume now 540
 Rolled through the labyrinthine dell ; and there
 Fretted a path through its descending curves
 With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
 Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,

Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and, its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
Mid toppling stones, black gulfs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo ! where the pass expands 550
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world : for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity, 560
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void
Scattering its waters to the passing winds. 570

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine
And torrent, were not all ;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green, 580
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,

In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice 590
Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek, 600
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness : not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard ; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death !
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night : 610
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world ; 620
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,

Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now, 630
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm ;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept ; no mortal pain or fear 640
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling :—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame 650
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still :
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night :—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved 660
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,

As their own voiceless earth and vacant air,
 Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
 That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
 Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
 No sense, no motion, no divinity—
 A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
 The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
 Once fed with many-voicèd waves—a dream
 Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
 Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now. 671

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
 Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
 With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
 From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
 Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
 Which but one living man has drained, who now,
 Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
 No proud exemption in the blighting curse
 He bears, over the world wanders for ever, 680
 Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
 Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
 Raking the cinders of a crucible
 For life and power, even when his feeble hand
 Shakes in its last decay, were the law
 Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
 Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
 Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
 The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
 The child of grace and genius. Heartless things 690
 Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
 And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
 From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
 In vesper low or joyous orison,
 Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—
 Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
 Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
 Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
 Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
 So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes 700
 That image sleep in death, upon that form

Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
 Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
 Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
 Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
 In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
 Let not high verse, mourning the memory
 Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
 Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
 Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence, 710
 And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
 To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
 It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
 Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
 Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
 Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
 The passionate tumult of a clinging hope ;
 But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
 Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
 Birth and the grave, that are not as they were. 720

DEDICATION OF 'THE REVOLT OF ISLAM'

TO MARY — — —

I

So now my summer task is ended, Mary,
 And I return to thee, mine own heart's home ;
 As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
 Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome ;
 Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
 A star among the stars of mortal night,
 If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
 Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
 With thy beloved name, thou Child of love and light.

II

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour, 10
 Is ended,—and the fruit is at thy feet !
 No longer where the woods to frame a bower
 With interlacèd branches mix and meet,
 Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
 Waterfalls leap among wild islands green,
 Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
 Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen :
 But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

III

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend,
 when first
 The clouds which wrap this world from youth did
 pass. 20
 I do remember well the hour which burst
 My spirit's sleep : a fresh May-dawn it was,
 When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
 And wept, I knew not why ; until there rose
 From the near schoolroom, voices, that, alas !
 Were but one echo from a world of woes—
 The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV

And then I clasped my hands and looked around—
 —But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
 Which poured their warm drops on the sunny
 ground— 30
 So, without shame, I spake :—‘ I will be wise,
 And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
 Such power, for I grow weary to behold
 The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
 Without reproach or check.’ I then controlled
 My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

V

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
 Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
 Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught

‘THE REVOLT OF ISLAM’

31

I cared to learn, but from that secret store 40
Wrought linkèd armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind ;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and
more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

VI

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one !—
Such once I sought in vain ; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone :— 50
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clod, until revived by thee.

VII

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain ;
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walked as free as light the clouds among, 60
Which many an envious slave then breathed in
vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long !

VIII

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now : no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent, 70
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample : this was ours, and we unshaken stood !

IX

Now has descended a serener hour,
 And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
 Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
 Which says :—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
 And from thy side two gentle babes are born
 To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
 Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn ;
 And these delights, and thou, have been to me 80
 The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

X

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
 But strike the prelude of a loftier strain ?
 Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
 Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
 Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
 And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway
 Hoher than was Amphion's ? I would fain
 Reply in hope—but I am worn away, 89
 And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

XI

And what art thou ? I know, but dare not speak :
 Time may interpret to his silent years.
 Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
 And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
 And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
 And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
 Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears :
 And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
 A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

XII

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth, 100
 Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
 I wonder not—for One then left this earth
 Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
 Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled

Of its departing glory ; still her fame
 Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
 Which shake these latter days ; and thou canst claim
 The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

XIII

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
 Which was the echo of three thousand years ; 110
 And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
 As some lone man who in a desert hears
 The music of his home :—unwonted fears
 Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
 And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
 Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
 Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-
 place.

XIV

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind !
 If there must be no response to my cry—
 If men must rise and stamp with fury blind 120
 On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
 Sweet friend ! can look from our tranquillity
 Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
 Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
 Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's
 sight,
 That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

FROM 'PRINCE ATHANASE'

FRAGMENT

'Twas at the season when the Earth upsprings
 From slumber, as a spherèd angel's child,
 Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings,
 Stands up before its mother bright and mild,
 Of whose soft voice the air expectant seems—
 So stood before the sun, which shone and smiled

To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant Earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green—and flowers burst forth like starry
beams ;—

The grass in the warm sun did start and move, 10
And sea-buds burst under the waves serene :—
How many a one, though none be near to love,

Loves then the shade of his own soul, half seen
In any mirror—or the spring's young minions,
The wingèd leaves amid the copses green ;—

How many a spirit then puts on the pinions
Of fancy, and outstrips the lagging blast,
And his own steps—and over wide dominions

Sweeps in his dream-drawn chariot, far and fast,
More fleet than storms—the wide world shrinks below,
When winter and despondency are past. 21

ROSALIND AND HELEN

A MODERN ECLOGUE

THE story of *Rosalind and Helen* is, undoubtedly, not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation; and if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awakens a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I wrote, to the impulse of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story; and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure, which only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with, and expresses, the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it.

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest peak of those delightful mountains, I can only offer as my excuse, that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend, with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain, that she has not been able to extinguish in me the very power of delineating sadness.

NAPLES, Dec. 20, 1818.

ROSALIND, HELEN AND HER CHILD

Scene, the Shore of the Lake of Como.

Helen. Come hither, my sweet Rosalind.
'Tis long since thou and I have met ;
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come sit by me. I see thee stand
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even
United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yon fair heaven. 10
Come, gentle friend : wilt sit by me ?
And be as thou wert wont to be
Ere we were disunited ?
None doth behold us now : the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited
If thou depart in scorn : oh ! come,
And talk of our abandoned home.
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me 20
Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,
Barren and dark although they be,
Were dearer than these chestnut woods :
Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream :
Which that we have abandoned now,
Weighs on the heart like that remorse
Which altered friendship leaves. I seek
No more our youthful intercourse. 30
That cannot be ! Rosalind, speak.
Speak to me. Leave me not.—When morn did come,
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted,—do not frown :
I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken :

But turn to me. Oh ! by this cherished token,
Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as 'twere but the memory of me,
And not my scornèd self who prayed to thee.

Rosalind. Is it a dream, or do I see 40
And hear frail Helen ? I would flee
Thy tainting touch ; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears ;
And my o'erburthened memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.
I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee : mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief :
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o'er thy wickedness 50
Even with a sister's woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse
To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now
Bewildered by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush, and weep that thou
Should'st love me still,—thou only !—There,
Let us sit on that gray stone,
Till our mournful talk be done. 60

Helen. Alas ! not there ; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.
A sound from there, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow !
In the dell of yon dark chestnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of Peace 70
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

Rosalind. Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

Henry. 'Tis Fenici's seat
Where you are going ? This is not the way,
Mamma ; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

Helen. Yes : I know :
I was bewildered. Kiss me, and be gay,
Dear boy : why do you sob ?

Henry. I do not know :
But it might break any one's heart to see 80
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

Helen. It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other ;
We are quite merry now : Good-night.

The boy

Lifted a sudden look upon his mother,
And in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, ' Bring home with you 90
That sweet strange lady-friend.' Then off he flew,
But stopped, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest's solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood,
Thro' which they took their way ;
And the gray shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling 100
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around
Through which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,

Man's early race once knelt beneath 110
 The overhanging deity.
 O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
 Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
 The pale snake, that with eager breath
 Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
 Is beaming with many a mingled hue,
 Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
 When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
 In the light of his own loveliness ;
 And the birds that in the fountain dip 120
 Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
 Above and round him wheel and hover.
 The fitful wind is heard to stir
 One solitary leaf on high ;
 The chirping of the grasshopper
 Fills every pause. There is emotion
 In all that dwells at noontide here :
 Then, through the intricate wild wood,
 A maze of life and light and motion
 Is woven. But there is stillness now : 130
 Gloom, and the trance of Nature now :
 The snake is in his cave asleep ;
 The birds are on the branches dreaming :
 Only the shadows creep :
 Only the glow-worm is gleaming :
 Only the owls and the nightingales
 Wake in this dell when daylight fails,
 And gray shades gather in the woods :
 And the owls have all fled far away
 In a merrier glen to hoot and play, 140
 For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
 The accustomed nightingale still broods
 On her accustomed bough.
 But she is mute ; for her false mate
 Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
 Had peopled with the spectral dead.
 For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold

And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair !
A fearful tale ! The truth was worse :

For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude :
For beneath yon very sky,
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on its mother ;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale ;
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her ;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls
Following. He was a gentle boy
And in all gentle sports took joy ;
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm : and Helen smiled
Through tears of awe on the gay child,

To think that a boy as fair as he,
 In years which never more may be,
 By that same fount, in that same wood, 190
 The like sweet fancies had pursued,
 And that a mother, lost like her,
 Had mournfully sate watching him
 Then all the scene was wont to swim
 Through the mist of a burning tear.

For many months had Helen known
 This scene ; and now she thither turned
 Her footsteps, not alone.
 The friend whose falsehood she had mourned,
 Sate with her on that seat of stone. 200
 Silent they sate , for evening,
 And the power its glimpses bring
 Had, with one awful shadow, quelled
 The passion of their grief. They sate
 With linked hands, for unrepelled
 Had Helen taken Rosalind's.

Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
 The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair,
 Which is twined in the sultry summer air
 Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre, 210
 Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
 And the sound of her heart that ever beat,
 As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
 Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
 Till her thoughts were free to float and flow ;
 And from her labouring bosom now,
 Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
 The voice of a long pent sorrow came.

Rosalind I saw the dark earth fall upon
 The coffin ; and I saw the stone 220
 Laid over him whom this cold breast
 Had pillowed to his nightly rest !
 Thou knowest not, thou canst not know
 My agony Oh ! I could not weep :
 The sources whence such blessings flow
 Were not to be approached by me

But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched,—and would not thence depart— 230
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone,
But when I told them,—‘ he is dead,’—
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about,
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout.
But I sate silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning weed.

They laughed, for he was dead : but I 240
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathed name ;
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none ; a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.
I'll tell thee truth. He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold :
Yet full of guile : his pale eyes ran 250
With tears, which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek :
He was a coward to the strong :
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak :
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to its home so cold and hollow. 260
He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day !
Oft, when my little ones at play,
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale

Of travellers, or of fairy land,—
 When the light from the wood-fire's dying brand
 Flashed on their faces,—if they heard
 Or thought they heard upon the stair
 His footstep, the suspended word 270
 Died on my lips : we all grew pale :
 The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
 If it thought it heard its father near ;
 And my two wild boys would near my knee
 Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully.

I'll tell thee truth : I loved another.
 His name in my ear was ever ringing,
 His form to my brain was ever clinging :
 Yet if some stranger breathed that name,
 My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast : 280
 My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
 My days were dim in the shadow cast
 By the memory of the same !
 Day and night, day and night,
 He was my breath and life and light,
 For three short years, which soon were passed.
 On the fourth, my gentle mother
 Led me to the shrine, to be
 His sworn bride eternally.
 And now we stood on the altar stair, 290
 When my father came from a distant land,
 And with a loud and fearful cry
 Rushed between us suddenly.
 I saw the stream of his thin gray hair,
 I saw his lean and lifted hand,
 And heard his words,—and live ! Oh God !
 Wherefore do I live ?—' Hold, hold !'
 He cried,—' I tell thee 'tis her brother !
 Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
 Of yon churchyard rests in her shroud so cold : 300
 I am now weak, and pale, and old :
 We were once dear to one another,
 I and that corpse ! Thou art our child !'
 Then with a laugh both long and wild

The youth upon the pavement fell :
They found him dead ! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see :
But I was calm. I went away :
I was clammy-cold like clay !
I did not weep : I did not speak : 310
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive !
Alas ! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone : it did not break.
My father lived a little while,
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woeful smile !
When he was in the churchyard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread : 320
My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content ;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had passed,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will, 330
Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Falling for ever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest ;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossessed,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave,—that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make 340
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair,—

When she was a thing that did not stir
 And the crawling worms were cradling her
 To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
 Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
 I lived : a living pulse then beat
 Beneath my heart that awakened me.
 What was this pulse so warm and free ? 350
 Alas ! I knew it could not be
 My own dull blood : 'twas like a thought
 Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
 Under my bosom and in my brain,
 And crept with the blood through every vein ;
 And hour by hour, day after day,
 The wonder could not charm away,
 But laid in sleep, my wakeful pain,
 Until I knew it was a child,
 And then I wept. For long, long years 360
 These frozen eyes had shed no tears :
 But now—'twas the season fair and mild
 When April has wept itself to May :
 I sate through the sweet sunny day
 By my window bowered round with leaves,
 And down my cheeks the quick tears fell
 Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
 When warm spring showers are passing o'er :
 O Helen, none can ever tell
 The joy it was to weep once more ! 370

I wept to think how hard it were
 To kill my babe, and take from it
 The sense of light, and the warm air,
 And my own fond and tender care,
 And love and smiles ; ere I knew yet
 That these for it might, as for me,
 Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
 And haply, I would dream, 'twere sweet
 To feed it from my faded breast,
 Or mark my own heart's restless beat 380
 Rock it to its untroubled rest,
 And watch the growing soul beneath

Dawn in faint smiles ; and hear its breath,
 Half interrupted by calm sighs,
 And search the depth of its fair eyes
 For long departed memories !
 And so I lived till that sweet load
 Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
 The stream of years, and on it bore
 Two shapes of gladness to my sight ; 390
 Two other babes, delightful more
 In my lost soul's abandoned night
 Than their own country ships may be
 Sailing towards wrecked mariners,
 Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
 For each, as it came, brought soothing tears,
 And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
 Sucking the sullen milk away
 About my frozen heart, did play,
 And weaned it, oh how painfully !— 400
 As they themselves were weaned each one
 From that sweet food,—even from the thirst
 Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
 Strange inmate of a living breast !
 Which all that I had undergone
 Of grief and shame, since she, who first
 The gates of that dark refuge closed,
 Came to my sight, and almost burst
 The seal of that Lethean spring ;
 But these fair shadows interposed : 410
 For all delights are shadows now !
 And from my brain to my dull brow
 The heavy tears gather and flow :
 I cannot speak : Oh let me weep !

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
 Glimmered among the moonlight dew :
 Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
 Their echoes in the darkness threw.
 When she grew calm, she thus did keep
 The tenor of her tale :

He died :

I know not how : he was not old,
 If age be numbered by its years :
 But he was bowed and bent with fears,
 Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
 Which, like fierce fever, left him weak ;
 And his strait lip and bloated cheek
 Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers ;
 And selfish cares with barren plough,
 Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
 And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed 430
 Upon the withering life within,
 Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
 Whether his ill were death or sin
 None knew, until he died indeed,
 And then men owned they were the same.

Seven days within my chamber lay
 That corse, and my babes made holiday :
 At last, I told them what is death :
 The eldest, with a kind of shame,
 Came to my knees with silent breath, 440
 And sate awe-stricken at my feet ;
 And soon the others left their play,
 And sate there too. It is unmeet
 To shed on the brief flower of youth
 The withering knowledge of the grave ;
 From me remorse then wrung that truth.
 I could not bear the joy which gave
 Too just a response to mine own.
 In vain. I dared not feign a groan ;
 And in their artless looks I saw, 450
 Between the mists of fear and awe,
 That my own thought was theirs ; and they
 Expressed it not in words, but said,
 Each in its heart, how every day
 Will pass in happy work and play,
 Now he is dead and gone away.

After the funeral all our kin
 Assembled, and the will was read.
 My friend, I tell thee, even the dead

Have strength, their putrid shrouds within, 460
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living, but a corse
Is merciless, and power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child ! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers : let it reach 470
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

Thou knowest what a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days :
'Tis Crime, and Fear, and Infamy.
And houseless Want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and Pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth's starlight smile, and makes its tears 480
First like hot gall, then dry for ever !
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported, that if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birthplace did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought : and he,
To whom next came their patrimony, 490
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Ave watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony ;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call ;

For in that killing lie 'twas said—
 'She is adulterous, and doth hold
 In secret that the Christian creed
 Is false, and therefore is much need
 That I should have a care to save
 My children from eternal fire.'
 Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
 And therefore dared to be a liar!
 In truth, the Indian on the pyre
 Of her dead husband, half consumed,
 As well might there be false, as I
 To those abhorred embraces doomed,
 Far worse than fire's brief agony.
 As to the Christian creed, if true
 Or false, I never questioned it:
 I took it as the vulgar do:
 Nor my vexed soul had leisure yet
 To doubt the things men say, or deem
 That they are other than they seem.

All present who those crimes did hear,
 In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
 Men, women, children, slunk away,
 Whispering with self-contented pride,
 Which half suspects its own base lie.
 I spoke to none, nor did abide,
 But silently I went my way,
 Nor noticed I where joyously
 Sate my two younger babes at play,
 In the court-yard through which I passed;
 But went with footsteps firm and fast
 Till I came to the brink of the ocean green,
 And there, a woman with gray hairs,
 Who had my mother's servant been,
 Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
 Made me accept a purse of gold,
 Half of the earnings she had kept
 To refuge her when weak and old.

With woe, which never sleeps or slept,
 I wander now. 'Tis a vain thought—

But on yon alp, whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it o'er the flood of cloud, 540
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud,
From that gray stone where first we met)
There—now who knows the dead feel nought?—
Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul, once said: 'Twere sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds and lulling snows, that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide, 550
Where weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close:
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure:
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?'
Then 'twas a wild and playful saying
At which I laughed, or seemed to laugh: 560
They were his words: now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph.
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt, and canst forgive
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught
And much less thee.

Helen. O speak not so,
But come to me and pour thy woe 570
Into this heart, full though it be,
Ay, overflowing with its own:
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan;
Its likeness upon earth to be,
Its express image; but thou art

More wretched. Sweet ! we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division ;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear since last we parted 580
All that has left me broken hearted ?

Rosalind. Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely
shorn

Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love, soon lost in total night.

Helen. Alas ! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold—wintry cold—
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child, 590
Though my soul with grief is gray and old.

Rosalind. Weep not at thine own words, though they
must make
Me weep. What is thy tale ?

Helen. I fear 'twill shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more,
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief ; a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly, but when he died
With him lay dead both hope and pride. 600
Alas ! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was labouring in that mighty birth,
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen—the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men ;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.

Among mankind what thence befell 610
Of strife, how vain, is known too well ;
When Liberty's dear paean fell

'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O Liberty !
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith, 620
And hope, and courage mute in death ;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth : in every other
First life then love its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother ;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet :
But he loved all things ever. Then
He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed power 630
Pleading for a world of woe :
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of human kind
He stood, like a spirit calming them ;
For, it was said, his words could bind
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream,
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But is revenge and fear and pride. 640
Joyous he was ; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before : his presence stung
The torturers with their victim's pain, 650
And none knew how ; and through their ears,
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue

Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
 Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
 Men wondered, and some sneered to see
 One sow what he could never reap :
 For he is rich, they said, and young,
 And might drink from the depths of luxury.
 If he seeks Fame, Fame never crowned
 The champion of a trampled creed : 660
 If he seeks Power, Power is enthroned
 'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
 Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil,
 Those who would sit near Power must toil ;
 And such, there sitting, all may see.
 What seeks he ? All that others seek
 He casts away, like a vile weed
 Which the sea casts unreturningly.
 That poor and hungry men should break
 The laws which wreak them toil and scorn, 670
 We understand ; but Lionel
 We know is rich and nobly born.
 So wondered they : yet all men loved
 Young Lionel, though few approved ;
 All but the priests, whose hatred fell
 Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
 The withering honey dew, which clings
 Under the bright green buds of May,
 Whilst they unfold their emerald wings :
 For he made verses wild and queer 680
 On the strange creeds priests hold so dear,
 Because they bring them land and gold.
 Of devils and saints and all such gear,
 He made tales which whoso heard or read
 Would laugh till he were almost dead.
 So this grew a proverb : ' Don't get old
 Till Lionel's " Banquet in Hell " you hear,
 And then you will laugh yourself young again.'
 So the priests hated him, and he
 Repaid their hate with cheerful glee. 690
 Ah, smiles and joyance quickly died,
 For public hope grew pale and dim

In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him,
As a summer flower that blows too soon
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,
When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Gray Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne ; 700
And Faith, the Python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train, and men
Were trampled and deceived again,
And words and shows again could bind
The wailing tribes of human kind
In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scornèd instrument 710
With which they drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore :
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals.
But each man found in his heart's brother
Cold cheer ; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed,
And the same round anew began,
Which the weary world yet ever ran. 720

Many then wept, not tears, but gall
Within their hearts, like drops which fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts, that claim
Men's care—ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair—
Indue the colours of this change,
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange, 730
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befell
 To many, most to Lionel,
 Whose hope was like the life of youth
 Within him, and when dead, became
 A spirit of unresting flame,
 Which goaded him in his distress
 Over the world's vast wilderness.
 Three years he left his native land,
 And on the fourth, when he returned,
 None knew him : he was stricken deep
 With some disease of mind, and turned
 Into aught unlike Lionel.
 On him, on whom, did he pause in sleep,
 Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
 And, did he wake, a wingèd band
 Of bright persuasions, which had fed
 On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
 Kept their swift pinions half outspread,
 To do on men his least command ;
 On him, whom once 'twas paradise
 Even to behold, now misery lay :
 In his own heart 'twas merciless,
 To all things else none may express
 Its innocence and tenderness.

740

750

'Twas said that he had refuge sought
 In love from his unquiet thought
 In distant lands, and been deceived
 By some strange show ; for there were found,
 Blotted with tears as those relieved
 By their own words are wont to do,
 These mournful verses on the ground,
 By all who read them blotted too.

760

'How am I changed ! my hopes were once like fire :
 I loved, and I believed that life was love.
 How am I lost ! on wings of swift desire
 Among Heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
 I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
 My liquid sleep : I woke, and did approve

All nature to my heart, and thought to make 770
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

'I love, but I believe in love no more.
I feel desire, but hope not. O, from sleep
Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long lost flattery now : I wake to weep,
And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep,
Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure,
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure.'

He dwelt beside me near the sea : 780

And oft in evening did we meet,
When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,
And talked : our talk was sad and sweet,
Till slowly from his mien there passed
The desolation which it spoke ;
And smiles,—as when the lightning's blast
Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,
The next spring shows leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair, 790

On its rent boughs,—again arrayed
His countenance in tender light :
His words grew subtile fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight :
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint :
And winged Hope, on which upborne
His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born 800
Floating amid the sunny skies,
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw,
Till like an exhalation, spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious : sweet

And subtile mists of sense and thought :
 Which wrapped us soon, when we might meet, 810
 Almost from our own looks and aught
 The wide world holds. And so, his mind
 Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear :
 For ever now his health declined,
 Like some frail bark which cannot bear
 The impulse of an altered wind,
 Though prosperous : and my heart grew full
 'Mid its new joy of a new care :
 For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
 As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are ; 820
 And soon his deep and sunny hair,
 In this alone less beautiful,
 Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
 The blood in his translucent veins
 Beat, not like animal life, but love
 Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
 When life had failed, and all its pains :
 And sudden sleep would seize him oft
 Like death, so calm, but that a tear,
 His pointed eyelashes between, 830
 Would gather in the light serene
 Of smiles, whose lustre bright and soft
 Beneath lay undulating there.
 His breath was like inconstant flame,
 As eagerly it went and came ;
 And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
 Till, like an image in the lake
 Which rains disturb, my tears would break
 The shadow of that slumber deep :
 Then he would bid me not to weep, 840
 And say with flattery false, yet sweet,
 That death and he could never meet,
 If I would never part with him.
 And so we loved, and did unite
 All that in us was yet divided :
 For when he said, that many a rite,
 By men to bind but once provided,
 Could not be shared by him and me,

Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing said—
‘We will have rites our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind.’
’Twas sunset as I spoke : one star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent,
Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower,
In the midst of a city vast and wide.
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell’s red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves : a trial,
I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage, nursed in hate ?
What the knit soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek, which late
It painted with its own delight ?
We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tingling of my blood,
And followed him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child ;
And when we came to the prison door
And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurned,
And when men drove me forth and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me ; then gazed awhile,
As if thro’ that black and massy pile,
And thro’ the crowd around him there,
And thro’ the dense and murky air,
And the thronged streets, he did espy

850

860

870

880

What poets know and prophesy ;
 And said, with voice that made them shiver 890
 And clung like music in my brain,
 And which the mute walls spoke again
 Prolonging it with deepened strain :
 ' Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
 Or the priests of the bloody faith ;
 They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
 Whose waves they have tainted with death :
 It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
 Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
 And their swords and their sceptres I floating see, 900
 Like wrecks in the surge of eternity.'

I dwelt beside the prison gate,
 And the strange crowd that out and in
 Passed, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
 Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
 But the fever of care was louder within.
 Soon, but too late, in penitence
 Or fear, his foes released him thence :
 I saw his thin and languid form,
 As leaning on the jailor's arm, 910
 Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while,
 To meet his mute and faded smile,
 And hear his words of kind farewell,
 He tottered forth from his damp cell.
 Many had never wept before,
 From whom fast tears then gushed and fell :
 Many will relent no more,
 Who sobbed like infants then : aye, all
 Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
 The rulers or the slaves of law, 920
 Felt with a new surprise and awe
 That they were human, till strong shame
 Made them again become the same.
 The prison blood-hounds, huge and grim,
 From human looks the infection caught,
 And fondly crouched and fawned on him ;
 And men have heard the prisoners say,

Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept 930
Their trampled bosoms almost slept :
Where, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding,—
Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

I know not how, but we were free :
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove thro' the streets apace ;
And we looked upon each other's face ;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined 940
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Thro' the veins of each united frame.
So thro' the long long streets we passed
Of the million-peopled City vast ;
Which is that desert, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none ;
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green, 950
And then I sunk in his embrace,
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love : and so we travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedgerow briar, 960
And there were odours then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings,
Floated and mingled far away,

'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
 And when the evening star came forth
 Above the curve of the new bent moon,
 And light and sound ebb'd from the earth, 97c
 Like the tide of the full and weary sea
 To the depths of its tranquillity,
 Our natures to its own repose
 Did the earth's breathless sleep attune :
 Like flowers, which on each other close
 Their languid leaves when daylight's gone,
 We lay, till new emotions came,
 Which seemed to make each mortal frame
 One soul of interwoven flame,
 A life in life, a second birth 98c
 In worlds diviner far than earth,
 Which, like two strains of harmony
 That mingle in the silent sky
 Then slowly disunite, passed by
 And left the tenderness of tears,
 A soft oblivion of all fears,
 A sweet sleep : so we travelled on
 Till we came to the home of Lionel,
 Among the mountains wild and lone,
 Beside the hoary western sea, 99c
 Which near the verge of the echoing shore
 The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward, with hair all hoar,
 As we alighted, wept to see
 His master changed so fearfully ;
 And the old man's sobs did waken me
 From my dream of unremaining gladness ;
 The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness
 When I looked, and saw that there was death
 On Lionel : yet day by day 100c
 He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
 And in my soul I dared to say,
 Nothing so bright can pass away :
 Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
 But he is—O how beautiful !

Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low ;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow 1010
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow :
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odours brought
From mountain flowers, even as it passed
His cheek would change, as the noonday sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his colour come and go, 1020
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes ;
And the breath, with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.
You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick, but not strong ; and with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy loneliness
His neck, and win me so to mingle 1030
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,
Alas ! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
But his, it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me !
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed, till soon, 1040
As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon,
Beneath its light invisible,
Is seen when it folds its gray wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain,
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul

Passed from beneath that strong control,
 And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
 Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
 On a green and sea-girt promontory, 1050
 Not far from where we dwelt, there stood
 In record of a sweet sad story,
 An altar and a temple bright
 Circled by steps, and o'er the gate
 Was sculptured, 'To Fidelity ;'
 And in the shrine an image sate,
 All veiled : but there was seen the light
 Of smiles, which faintly could express
 A mingled pain and tenderness 1060
 Through that ethereal drapery.
 The left hand held the head, the right—
 Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
 You might see the nerves quivering within—
 Was forcing the point of a barbèd dart
 Into its side-convulsing heart.
 An unskilled hand, yet one informed
 With genius, had the marble warmed
 With that pathetic life. This tale
 It told : A dog had from the sea,
 When the tide was raging fearfully, 1070
 Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
 Then died beside her on the sand,
 And she that temple thence had planned ;
 But it was Lionel's own hand
 Had wrought the image. Each new moon
 That lady did, in this lone fane,
 The rites of a religion sweet,
 Whose god was in her heart and brain :
 The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
 On the marble floor beneath her feet, 1080
 And she brought crowns of sea-buds white,
 Whose odour is so sweet and faint,
 And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
 Woven in devices fine and quaint.
 And tears from her brown eyes did stain

The altar : need but look upon
 That dying statue fair and wan,
 If tears should cease, to weep again :
 And rare Arabian odours came,
 Through the myrtle copses steaming thence 1090
 From the hissing frankincense,
 Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
 Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome—
 That ivory dome, whose azure night
 With golden stars, like heaven, was bright—
 O'er the split cedar's pointed flame ;
 And the lady's harp would kindle there
 The melody of an old air,
 Softer than sleep ; the villagers
 Mixed their religion up with hers, 1100
 And as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane :
 Daylight on its last purple cloud
 Was lingering gray, and soon her strain
 The nightingale began ; now loud,
 Climbing in circles the windless sky,
 Now dying music ; suddenly
 'Tis scattered in a thousand notes,
 And now to the hushed ear it floats
 Like field smells known in infancy, 1110
 Then failing, soothes the air again.
 We sate within that temple lone,
 Pavilioned round with Parian stone :
 His mother's harp stood near, and oft
 I had awakened music soft
 Amid its wires : the nightingale
 Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale.
 ' Now drain the cup,' said Lionel,
 ' Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
 With the wine of her bright and liquid song ! 1120
 Heardst thou not sweet words among
 That heaven-resounding minstrelsy ?
 Heardst thou not, that those who die
 Awake in a world of ecstasy ?

That love, when limbs are interwoven,
 And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
 And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
 And music, when one beloved is singing,
 Is death ? Let us drain right joyously
 The cup which the sweet bird fills for me.' 1130
 He paused, and to my lips he bent
 His own : like spirit his words went
 Through all my limbs with the speed of fire ;
 And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,
 Filled me with the flame divine,
 Which in their orbs was burning far,
 Like the light of an unmeasured star,
 In the sky of midnight dark and deep :
 Yes, 'twas his soul that did inspire
 Sounds, which my skill could ne'er awaken ; 1140
 And first, I felt my fingers sweep
 The harp, and a long quivering cry
 Burst from my lips in symphony :
 The dusk and solid air was shaken,
 As swift and swifter the notes came
 From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,
 And from my bosom, labouring
 With some unutterable thing :
 The awful sound of my own voice made
 My faint lips tremble ; in some mood 1150
 Of wordless thought Lionel stood
 So pale, that even beside his cheek
 The snowy column from its shade
 Caught whiteness : yet his countenance
 Raised upward, burned with radiance
 Of spirit-piercing joy, whose light,
 Like the moon struggling through the night
 Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
 With beams that might not be confined.
 I paused, but soon his gestures kindled 1160
 New power, as by the moving wind
 The waves are lifted, and my song
 To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
 And from the twinkling wires among,

My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life-dissolving sound,
Yet faint ; in aery rings they bound
My Lionel, who, as every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly ; 1170
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy : with looks serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs : words I dare not say
We mixed, and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold :
'What is it with thee, love ?' I said :
No word, no look, no motion ! yes, 1180
There was a change, but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment's hope be told.
I looked, and knew that he was dead,
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

O that I were now dead ! but such
(Did they not, love, demand too much,
Those dying murmurs ?) he forbade.
O that I once again were mad ! 1190
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy, did I forget thee too ?
Alas, we know not what we do
When we speak words.

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit
Beside me, on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it. 1200
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers,
And the stars methought grew unlike ours,

And the azure sky and the stormless sea
 Made me believe that I had died,
 And waked in a world, which was to me
 Drear hell, though heaven to all beside :
 Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
 Whilst animal life many long years
 Had rescue from a chasm of tears ;
 And when I woke, I wept to find
 That the same lady, bright and wise,
 With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
 The mother of my Lionel,
 Had tended me in my distress,
 And died some months before. Nor less
 Wonder, but far more peace and joy
 Brought in that hour my lovely boy ;
 For through that trance my soul had well
 The impress of thy being kept ;
 And if I waked, or if I slept,
 No doubt, though memory faithless be,
 Thy image ever dwelt on me ;
 And thus, O Lionel, like thee
 Is our sweet child. 'Tis sure most strange
 I knew not of so great a change,
 As that which gave him birth, who now
 Is all the solace of my woe.

1210

1220

That Lionel great wealth had left
 By will to me, and that of all
 The ready lies of law bereft
 My child and me, might well befall.
 But let me think not of the scorn,
 Which from the meanest I have borne,
 When, for my child's beloved sake,
 I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
 The very laws themselves do make :
 Let me not say scorn is my fate,
 Lest I be proud, suffering the same
 With those who live in deathless fame.

1230

She ceased.—' Lo, where red morning thro' the woods
 Is burning o'er the dew ; ' said Rosalind.

1241

And with these words they rose, and towards the
flood

Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined :
Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore
Is shadowed with deep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies,
And with their shadows the clear depths below,
And where a little terrace from its bowers,
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon-flowers, 1250
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
The liquid marble of the windless lake ;
And where the aged forest's limbs look hoar,
Under the leaves which their green garments make,
They come : 'tis Helen's home, and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude, its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within 'twas scarce like Italy.
And when she saw how all things there were planned,
As in an English home, dim memory 1261
Disturbed poor Rosalind : she stood as one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be,
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said, ' Observe, that brow was Lionel's,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes, they are two wells
Of liquid love : let us not wake him yet.'
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept 1270
A shower of burning tears, which fell upon
His face, and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth, changed in all else, yet friends again,
Such as they were, when o'er the mountain heather
They wandered in their youth, through sun and
rain

And after many years, for human things
 Change even like the ocean and the wind, 1280
 Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
 And in their circle thence some visitings
 Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene :
 A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
 And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
 The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
 And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
 From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
 Like springs which mingle in one flood became,
 And in their union soon their parents saw 1290
 The shadow of the peace denied to them.
 And Rosalind, for when the living stem
 Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall,
 Died ere her time ; and with deep grief and awe
 The pale survivors followed her remains
 Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
 Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
 Her tomb ; and on Chiavenna's precipice
 They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,
 Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun, 1300
 Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
 The last, when it had sunk ; and thro' the night
 The charioteers of Arctos wheelèd round
 Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
 Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
 With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
 And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
 With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
 Filled the froze air with unaccustomed light :
 Such flowers, as in the wintry memory bloom 1310
 Of one friend left, adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
 Whose sufferings too were less, Death slower led
 Into the peace of his dominion cold :
 She died among her kindred, being old.
 And know, that if love die not in the dead
 As in the living, none of mortal kind
 Are blest, as now Helen and Rosalind.

JULIAN AND MADDALO

A CONVERSATION

PREFACE

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding Spring,
Are saturated not—nor Love with tears.

VIRGIL'S *Gallus*.

COUNT MADDALO is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud: he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentered and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the

power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world, he is for ever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel, and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems, by his own account, to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be like many other stories of the same kind: the unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

I RODE one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice: a bare strand
Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons; and no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes ro
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows; and yet more
Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove 20
The living spray along the sunny air

Into our faces ; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north ;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Haïmonising with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts acreal merriment.
So, as we rode, we talked ; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours, 30
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,
None slow enough for sadness : till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish :—’twas forlorn, 40
Yet pleasing, such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of Hell
Concerning God, freewill and destiny :
Of all that earth has been or yet may be,
All that vain men imagine or believe,
Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,
We descanted, and I (for ever still
Is it not wise to make the best of ill ?)
Argued against despondency, but pride
Made my companion take the darker side.
The sense that he was greater than his kind 50
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.
Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,
Over the horizon of the mountains ;—Oh,
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy !
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
Of cities they encircle !—it was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it : and then, 60
Just where we had dismounted, the Count’s men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.—

As those who pause on some delightful way
Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
Looking upon the evening, and the flood
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky . . . the hoar
And airy Alps towards the North appeared
Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared
Between the East and West ; and half the sky 10
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep West into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills : they were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles—
And then—as if the Earth and Sea had been 20
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering as from waves of flame
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. ' Ere it fade,'
Said my companion, ' I will show you soon
A better station '—so, o'er the lagoon
We glided ; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam, 30
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.
I was about to speak, when—' We are even
Now at the point I meant,' said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
' Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell.'
I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island ; such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile, 40
A windowless, deformed and dreary pile ;
And on the top an open tower, where hung

A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung ;
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue :
The broad sun sunk behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief.—‘ What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,’
Said Maddalo, ‘ and ever at this hour
Those who may cross the water, hear that bell
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell, 110
To vespers.’—‘ As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern maker,’ I replied. ‘ O ho !
You talk as in years past,’ said Maddalo.
‘ ’Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ’s flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs—if you can’t swim
Beware of Providence.’ I looked on him,
But the gay smile had faded in his eye.
‘ And such,’—he cried, ‘ is our mortality, 120
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine !—
And like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
Hung in a heaven-illumined tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart and pray—as madmen do
For what ? they know not,—till the night of death
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought and yet were baffled.’ I recall 130
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill,
And the black bell became invisible,
And the red tower looked gray, and all between
The churches, ships and palaces were seen
Huddled in gloom ;—into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Conveyed me to my lodging by the way. 140
The following morn was rainy, cold and dim ;
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him,

And whilst I waited with his child I played ;
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made,
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,
Graceful without design and unforeseeing,
With eyes—Oh speak not of her eyes !—which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning, as we never see
But in the human countenance : with me 150
She was a special favourite : I had nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world ; and she yet seemed to know
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less changed than she was by six months or so ;
For after her first shyness was worn out
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
When the Count entered. Salutations past—
‘ The word you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit—if man be 160
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws
(Tho’ I may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke :
Mine is another faith ’—thus much I spoke
And noting he replied not, added : ‘ See
This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free ;
She spends a happy time with little care,
While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
As came on you last night—it is our will 170
That thus enchains us to permitted ill—
We might be otherwise—we might be all
We dream of happy, high, majestic.
Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek
But in our mind ? and if we were not weak
Should we be less in deed than in desire ? ’
‘ Ay, if we were not weak—and we aspire
How vainly to be strong ! ’ said Maddalo :
‘ You talk Utopia.’ ‘ It remains to know,’
I then rejoined, ‘ and those who try may find 180
How strong the chains are which our spirit bind ;
Brittle perchance as straw . . . We are assured

Much may be conquered, much may be endured,
 Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
 That we have power over ourselves to do
 And suffer—what, we know not till we try ;
 But something nobler than to live and die—
 So taught those kings of old philosophy
 Who reigned, before Religion made men blind ;
 And those who suffer with their suffering kind 190
 Yet feel their faith, religion.' 'My dear friend,'
 Said Maddalo, 'my judgement will not bend
 To your opinion, though I think you might
 Make such a system refutation-tight
 As far as words go. I knew one like you
 Who to this city came some months ago,
 With whom I argued in this sort, and he
 Is now gone mad,—and so he answered me,—
 Poor fellow ! but if you would like to go
 We'll visit him, and his wild talk will show 200
 How vain are such aspiring theories.'
 'I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
 And that a want of that true theory, still,
 Which seeks a "soul of goodness" in things ill
 Or in himself or others, has thus bowed
 His being—there are some by nature proud,
 Who patient in all else demand but this—
 To love and be beloved with gentleness ;
 And being scorned, what wonder if they die
 Some living death ? this is not destiny 210
 But man's own wilful ill.'

As thus I spoke
 Servants announced the gondola, and we
 Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
 Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.
 We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
 Fierce yells and howlings and lamentings keen,
 And laughter where complaint had merrier been,
 Moans, shrieks, and curses, and blaspheming prayers
 Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs
 Into an old courtyard. I heard on high, 220
 Then, fragments of most touching melody,

But looking up saw not the singer there—
Through the black bars in the tempestuous air
I saw, like weeds on a wrecked palace growing,
Long tangled locks flung wildly forth, and flowing,
Of those who on a sudden were beguiled
Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled
Hearing sweet sounds.—Then I: ‘Methinks there
were

A cure of these with patience and kind care,
If music can thus move . . . but what is he 230
Whom we seek here?’ ‘Of his sad history
I know but this,’ said Maddalo: ‘he came
To Venice a dejected man, and fame
Said he was wealthy, or he had been so;
Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe;
But he was ever talking in such sort
As you do—far more sadly—he seemed hurt,
Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
To hear but of the oppression of the strong,
Or those absurd deceits (I think with you 240
In some respects, you know) which carry through
The excellent impostors of this earth
When they outface detection—he had worth,
Poor fellow! but a humourist in his way’—
‘Alas, what drove him mad?’ ‘I cannot say:
A lady came with him from France, and when
She left him and returned, he wandered then
About yon lonely isles of desert sand
Till he grew wild—he had no cash or land
Remaining,—the police had brought him here— 250
Some fancy took him and he would not bear
Removal; so I fitted up for him
Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim,
And sent him busts and books and urns for flowers,
Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
And instruments of music—you may guess
A stranger could do little more or less
For one so gentle and unfortunate:
And those are his sweet strains which charm the
weight

From madmen's chains, and make this Hell appear 260
A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear.'—
'Nay, this was kind of you—he had no claim,
As the world says'—'None—but the very same
Which I on all mankind were I as he
Fallen to such deep reverse;—his melody
Is interrupted—now we hear the din
Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin;
Let us now visit him; after this strain
He ever communes with himself again,
And sees nor hears not any.' Having said 270
These words we called the keeper, and he led
To an apartment opening on the sea—
There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully
Near a piano, his pale fingers twined
One with the other, and the ooze and wind
Rushed through an open casement, and did sway
His hair, and starred it with the brackish spray;
His head was leaning on a music book,
And he was muttering, and his lean limbs shook;
His lips were pressed against a folded leaf 280
In hue too beautiful for health, and grief
Smiled in their motions as they lay apart—
As one who wrought from his own fervid heart
The eloquence of passion, soon he raised
His sad meek face and eyes lustrous and glazed
And spoke—sometimes as one who wrote, and thought
His words might move some heart that heeded not,
If sent to distant lands: and then as one
Reproaching deeds never to be undone
With wondering self-compassion; then his speech 290
Was lost in grief, and then his words came each
Unmodulated, cold, expressionless,—
But that from one jarred accent you might guess
It was despair made them so uniform:
And all the while the loud and gusty storm
Hissed through the window, and we stood behind
Stealing his accents from the envious wind
Unseen. I yet remember what he said
Distinctly: such impression his words made.

'Month after month,' he cried, 'to bear this load
And as a jade urged by the whip and goad 301
To drag life on, which like a heavy chain
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain!—
And not to speak my grief—O, not to dare
To give a human voice to my despair,
But live and move, and, wretched thing! smile on
As if I never went aside to groan,
And wear this mask of falsehood even to those
Who are most dear—not for my own repose—
Alas! no scorn or pain or hate could be 310
So heavy as that falsehood is to me—
But that I cannot bear more altered faces
Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,
More misery, disappointment, and mistrust
To own me for their father . . . Would the dust
Were covered in upon my body now!
That the life ceased to toil within my brow!
And then these thoughts would at the least be fled;
Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.

'What Power delights to torture us? I know 320
That to myself I do not wholly owe
What now I suffer, though in part I may.
Alas! none strewed sweet flowers upon the way
Where wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain
My shadow, which will leave me not again—
If I have erred, there was no joy in error,
But pain and insult and unrest and terror;
I have not as some do, bought penitence
With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence,
For then,—if love and tenderness and truth 330
Had overlived hope's momentary youth,
My creed should have redeemed me from repenting;
But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting
Met love excited by far other seeming
Until the end was gained . . . as one from dreaming
Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state
Such as it is.—

'O Thou, my spirit's mate

Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,
 Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes
 If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see— 340
 My secret groans must be unheard by thee,
 Thou wouldst weep tears bitter as blood to know
 Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.

' Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed
 In friendship, let me not that name degrade
 By placing on your hearts the secret load
 Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road
 To peace and that is truth, which follow ye !
 Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
 Yet think not though subdued—and I may well 350
 Say that I am subdued—that the full Hell
 Within me would infect the untainted breast
 Of sacred nature with its own unrest ;
 As some perverted beings think to find
 In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind
 Which scorn or hate have wounded—O how vain !
 The dagger heals not but may rend again . . .
 Believe that I am ever still the same
 In creed as in resolve, and what may tame
 My heart, must leave the understanding free, 360
 Or all would sink in this keen agony—
 Nor dream that I will join the vulgar cry ;
 Or with my silence sanction tyranny ;
 Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain
 In any madness which the world calls gain,
 Ambition or revenge or thoughts as stern
 As those which make me what I am ; or turn
 To avarice or misanthropy or lust . . .
 Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust !
 Till then the dungeon may demand its prey, 370
 And Poverty and Shame may meet and say—
 Halting beside me on the public way—
 " That love-devoted youth is ours—let's sit
 Beside him—he may live some six months yet."
 Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,
 May ask some willing victim, or ye friends

May fall under some sorrow which this heart
Or hand may share or vanquish or avert ;
I am prepared—in truth with no proud joy—
To do or suffer aught, as when a boy 380
I did devote to justice and to love
My nature, worthless now ! . . .

‘ I must remove
A veil from my pent mind. ’Tis torn aside !
O, pallid as Death’s dedicated bride,
Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
Am I not wan like thee ? at the grave’s call
I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball
To greet the ghastly paramour, for whom
Thou hast deserted me . . . and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed . . . But I beside your feet 390
Will lie and watch ye from my winding sheet—
Thus . . . wide awake tho’ dead . . . yet stay, O stay !
Go not so soon—I know not what I say—
Hear but my reasons . . I am mad, I fear,
My fancy is o’erwrought . . thou art not here . . .
Pale art thou, ’tis most true . . but thou art gone,
Thy work is finished . . . I am left alone !—

‘ Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast
Which, like a serpent, thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent ? 400
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content ?
Did not thy love awaken mine ? I thought
That thou wert she who said, “ You kiss me not
Ever, I fear you do not love me now ”—
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her, who would fain forget these words : but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

‘ You say that I am proud—that when I speak
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
The spirit it expresses . . . Never one 410
Humbled himself before, as I have done !
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, though it wound not—then with prostrate head

Sinks in the dusk and writhes like me—and dies ?
 No : wears a living death of agonies !
 As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
 Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass
 Slow, ever-moving,—making moments be
 As mine seem—each an immortality !

‘ That you had never seen me—never heard 420
 My voice, and more than all had ne’er endured
 The deep pollution of my loathed embrace—
 That your eyes ne’er had lied love in my face—
 That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
 The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
 With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne’er
 Our hearts had for a moment mingled there
 To disunite in horror—these were not
 With thee, like some suppressed and hideous thought
 Which flits athwart our musings, but can find 430
 No rest within a pure and gentle mind . . .
 Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,
 And searedst my memory o’er them,—for I heard
 And can forget not . . . they were ministered
 One after one, those curses. Mix them up
 Like self-destroying poisons in one cup,
 And they will make one blessing which thou ne’er
 Didst imprecate for, on me,—death.

‘ It were
 A cruel punishment for one most cruel.
 If such can love, to make that love the fuel 440
 Of the mind’s hell ; hate, scorn, remorse, despair :
 But *me*—whose heart a stranger’s tear might wear
 As water-drops the sandy fountain-stone,
 Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
 For woes which others hear not, and could see
 The absent with the glance of phantasy,
 And with the poor and trampled sit and weep,
 Following the captive to his dungeon deep ;
Me—who am as a nerve o’er which do creep

The else unfelt oppressions of this earth, 450
 And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth,
 When all beside was cold—that thou on me
 Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony—
 Such curses are from lips once eloquent
 With love's too partial praise—let none relent
 Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name
 Henceforth, if an example for the same
 They seek . . . for thou on me lookedst so, and so—
 And didst speak thus . . . and thus . . . I live to show
 How much men bear and die not ! 460

‘Thou wilt tell,

With the grimace of hate, how horrible
 It was to meet my love when thine grew less ;
 Thou wilt admire how I could e'er address
 Such features to love's work . . . this taunt, though true,
 (For indeed Nature nor in form nor hue
 Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)
 Shall not be thy defence . . . for since thy lip
 Met mine first, years long past, since thine eye kindled
 With soft fire under mine, I have not dwindled
 Nor changed in mind or body, or in aught 470
 But as love changes what it loveth not
 After long years and many trials.

‘How vain

Are words ! I thought never to speak again,
 Not even in secret,—not to my own heart—
 But from my lips the unwilling accents start,
 And from my pen the words flow as I write,
 Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears . . . my sight
 Is dim to see that character'd in vain
 On this unfeeling leaf which burns the brain
 And eats into it . . . blotting all things fair 480
 And wise and good which time had written there.

‘Those who inflict must suffer, for they see
 The work of their own hearts, and this must be
 Our chastisement or recompense—O child !
 I would that thine were like to be more mild

For both our wretched sakes . . . for thine the most
 Who feelest already all that thou hast lost
 Without the power to wish it thine again ;
 And as slow years pass, a funereal train
 Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend 490
 Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend
 No thought on my dead memory ?

. ‘ Alas, love ! ’

Fear me not . . . against thee I would not move
 A finger in despite. Do I not live
 That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve ?
 I give thee tears for scorn and love for hate ;
 And that thy lot may be less desolate
 Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain
 From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.
 Then, when thou speakest of me, never say 500
 “ He could forgive not.” Here I cast away
 All human passions, all revenge, all pride ;
 I think, speak, act no ill ; I do but hide
 Under these words, like embers, every spark
 Of that which has consumed me—quick and dark
 The grave is yawning . . . as its roof shall cover
 My limbs with dust and worms under and over
 So let Oblivion hide this grief . . . the air
 Closes upon my accents, as despair
 Upon my heart—let death upon despair ! ’ 510

He ceased, and overcome leant back awhile,
 Then rising, with a melancholy smile
 Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept
 A heavy sleep, and in his dreams he wept
 And muttered some familiar name, and we
 Wept without shame in his society.
 I think I never was impressed so much ;
 The man who were not, must have lacked a touch
 Of human nature . . . then we lingered not,
 Although our argument was quite forgot, 520
 But calling the attendants, went to dine
 At Maddalo’s ; yet neither cheer nor wine

Could give us spirits, for we talked of him
 And nothing else, till daylight made stars dim ;
 And we agreed his was some dreadful ill
 Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,
 By a dear friend ; some deadly change in love
 Of one vowed deeply which he dreamed not of ;
 For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot
 Of falsehood on his mind which flourished not 530
 But in the light of all-beholding truth ;
 And having stamped this canker on his youth
 She had abandoned him—and how much more
 Might be his woe, we guessed not—he had store
 Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
 From his nice habits and his gentleness ;
 These were now lost . . . it were a grief indeed
 If he had changed one unsustaining reed
 For all that such a man might else adorn.
 The colours of his mind seemed yet unworn ; 540
 For the wild language of his grief was high,
 Such as in measure were called poetry ;
 And I remember one remark which then
 Maddalo made. He said : ‘ Most wretched men
 Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
 They learn in suffering what they teach in song.’

If I had been an unconnected man
 I, from this moment, should have formed some plan
 Never to leave sweet Venice,—for to me
 It was delight to ride by the lone sea ; 550
 And then, the town is silent—one may write
 Or read in gondolas by day or night,
 Having the little brazen lamp alight,
 Unseen, uninterrupted ; books are there,
 Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
 Which were twin-born with poetry, and all
 We seek in towns, with little to recall
 Regrets for the green country. I might sit
 In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit
 And subtle talk would cheer the winter night 560
 And make me know myself, and the firelight

Would flash upon our faces, till the day
 Might dawn and make me wonder at my stay :
 But I had friends in London too : the chief
 Attraction here, was that I sought relief
 From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought
 Within me—'twas perhaps an idle thought—
 But I imagined that if day by day
 I watched him, and but seldom went away,
 And studied all the beatings of his heart 570
 With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
 For their own good, and could by patience find
 An entrance to the caverns of his mind,
 I might reclaim him from his dark estate :
 In friendships I had been most fortunate—
 Yet never saw I one whom I would call
 More willingly my friend ; and this was all
 Accomplished not ; such dreams of baseless good
 Oft come and go in crowds or solitude
 And leave no trace—but what I now designed 580
 Made for long years impression on my mind.
 The following morning, urged by my affairs,
 I left bright Venice.

After many years
 And many changes I returned ; the name
 Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same ;
 But Maddalo was travelling far away
 Among the mountains of Armenia.
 His dog was dead. His child had now become
 A woman ; such as it has been my doom
 To meet with few,—a wonder of this earth, 590
 Where there is little of transcendent worth,—
 Like one of Shakespeare's women : kindly she,
 And, with a manner beyond courtesy,
 Received her father's friend ; and when I asked
 Of the lorn maniac, she her memory tasked,
 And told as she had heard the mournful tale :
 ' That the poor sufferer's health began to fail
 Two years from my departure, but that then
 The lady who had left him, came again.
 Her mien had been imperious, but she now 600

Looked meek—perhaps remorse had brought her low.
Her coming made him better, and they stayed
Together at my father's—for I played,
As I remember, with the lady's shawl—
I might be six years old—but after all
She left him' . . . 'Why, her heart must have been
tough :

How did it end ? ' ' And was not this enough ?
They met—they parted '—' Child, is there no more ? '
' Something within that interval which bore
The stamp of *why* they parted, *how* they met : 610
Yet if thine aged eyes disdain to wet
Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remembered tears,
Ask me no more, but let the silent years
Be closed and cased over their memory
As yon mute marble where their corpses lie.'
I urged and questioned still, she told me how
All happened—but the cold world shall not know,

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

A LYRICAL DRAMA

IN FOUR ACTS

AUDISNE HALC AMPHIARAM, SUB TERRAM ABDITE ?

PREFACE

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and

quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan, and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind. Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly

popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate, because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same, the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in

the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them. one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers, he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art, by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness, it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Aeschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope, each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, 'a passion for reforming the world' what passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supereroga-

tory in verse My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence, aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Aeschylus rather than Plato as my model

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid, and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts, the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PROMETHEUS
 DEMOGORGON.
 JUPITER
 THE EARTH.
 OCEAN.
 APOLLO.
 MERCURY.
 ASIA
 PANTHEA } Oceanides.
 IONE }
 HERCULES
 THE PHANTASY OF JUPITER.
 THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
 THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
 SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
 SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS. FURIES

ACT I

SCENE.—*A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.*

PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.*

PANTHEA and IONE *are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the Scene, morning slowly breaks.*

Prometheus. Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits

But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes ! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn, 10
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire :—
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God !
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain, 20
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured ; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever !

No change. no pause, no hope ! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt ?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen ? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony ?
Ah me ! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever ! 30

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart ; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me : and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind : 40
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east ; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood 50
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain ! Ah no ! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven !
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within ! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, through the mist 60
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell !
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India ! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams !
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world ! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish 70

Is dead within ; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now !
What was that curse ? for ye all heard me speak.

First Voice (from the Mountains).

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood :
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude.

Second Voice (from the Springs).

Thunderbolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter, 80
Thro' a city and a solitude.

Third Voice (from the Air).

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

Fourth Voice (from the Whirlwinds).

We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages ; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder. 90

First Voice.

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

Second Voice.

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, ' Ah, woe is me ! '
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

Third Voice.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven : 100
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

Fourth Voice.

And we shrank back : for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is as hell to us.

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, ' Misery ! ' then ; the hollow Heaven replied,
' Misery ! ' And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds, 110
And the pale nations heard it, ' Misery ! '

Prometheus. I heard a sound of voices : not the
voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan ? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe ?
Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams, 120
Now seen athwart froze vapours, deep below,
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes ;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me ? me alone, who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses :
Why answer ye not, still ? Brethren !

The Earth.

They dare not. 130

Prometheus. Who dares ? for I would hear that
curse again. .

Ha, what an awful whisper rises up !
'Tis scarce like sound : it tingles through the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit ! from thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him ?

The Earth. How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead ?

Prometheus. Thou art a living spirit ; speak as they.

The Earth. I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's
fell King 140

Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good, and though the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God,
Being wise and kind : earnestly hearken now.

Prometheus. Obscurely through my brain, like
shadows dim,

Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love ;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

The Earth. No, thou canst not hear :
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known 150
Only to those who die.

Prometheus. And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice ?

The Earth. I am the Earth,
Thy mother ; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy !
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust, 160
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread,
Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.
Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us : their inhabitants beheld
My spherèd light wane in wide Heaven ; the sea

Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown ;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains ;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities ; foodless toads 170
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled :
When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
And Famine ; and black blight on herb and tree ;
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief ; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer ; ay, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not, 180
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.

Prometheus.

Venerable mother !

All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort ; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting ; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not. 190

The Earth. They shall be told. Ere Babylon was
dust,

The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death :
One that which thou beholdest ; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more ;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men, 200
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beautiful shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,

'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains ; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms ; heroes, men, and beasts ;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom ;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will 210
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply : so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.

Prometheus. Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me. 220
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear !

Ione.

My wings are folded o'er mine ears :
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes :
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds ;
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds !
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake. 230

Panthea.

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven ;
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

Phantasm of Jupiter. Why have the secret powers
of this strange world 240
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms ? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness ? And, proud sufferer, who art thou ?

Prometheus. Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

The Earth. Listen ! And though your echoes must
be mute, 250
Gray mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

Phantasm. A spirit seizes me and speaks within :
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

Panthea. See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the
Heaven
Darkens above.

Ione. He speaks ! O shelter me !

Prometheus. I see the curse on gestures proud and
cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles, 260
Written as on a scroll : yet speak : Oh, speak !

Phantasm.

Fiend, I defy thee ! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do ;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear ;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms 270
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Ay, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon ethereal tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love :
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate ;
And thus devote to sleepless agony, 280
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord : O, thou,
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship : all-prevailing foe !
I curse thee ! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse ;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony ;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain, 290
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving
brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good ;
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally ;
And after many a false and fruitless crime 300
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space
and time.

Prometheus. Were these my words, O Parent ?

The Earth.

They were thine.

Prometheus. It doth repent me : words are quick
and vain ;

Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

The Earth.

Misery, Oh misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead, 310
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquishèd.

First Echo.

Lies fallen and vanquishèd !

Second Echo.

Fallen and vanquishèd !

Ione.

Fear not : 'tis but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow 320
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

Panthea. 'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mer-
cury.

Ione.

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd— 330

Panthea.

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

Ione.

Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed ?

Panthea.

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

First Fury. Ha ! I scent life !

Second Fury. Let me but look into his eyes !

Third Fury. The hope of torturing him smells like
a heap

Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle. 340

First Fury. Darest thou delay, O Herald ! take
cheer, Hounds

Of Hell : what if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport—who can please long
The Omnipotent ?

Mercury. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise ! and Gorgon,
Chimaera, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate :
These shall perform your task.

First Fury. Oh, mercy ! mercy ! 350
We die with our desire : drive us not back !

Mercury. Crouch then in silence.

Awful Sufferer !

To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas ! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more : aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy woin form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good, 360
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent ; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught

And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task. 370
Be it not so ! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme :
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession ; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart :
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

Prometheus. Evil minds 380
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has ; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day : whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair :
Whilst my belovèd race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense : 'tis just :
He who is evil can receive no good ;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost, 390
He can feel hate, fear, shame ; not gratitude :
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try :
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield ? Which yet I will not yield. 400
Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence : secure are they :
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down

Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the hell-hounds clamour : fear delay :
Behold ! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

Mercury. Oh, that we might be spared : I to inflict
And thou to suffer ! Once more answer me : 411
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power ?

Prometheus. I know but this, that it must come.

Mercury. Alas !
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain ?

Prometheus. They last while Jove must reign : nor
more, nor less
Do I desire or fear.

Mercury. Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight, 420
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless ;
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved ?

Prometheus. Perchance no thought can count them,
yet they pass.

Mercury. If thou might'st dwell among the Gods
the while
Lapped in voluptuous joy ?

Prometheus. I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

Mercury. Alas ! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

Prometheus. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene, 430
As light in the sun, throned : how vain is talk !
Call up the fiends.

Ione. O, sister, look ! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar ;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind !

Mercury. I must obey his words and thine : alas !
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart !

Panthea. See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

Ione. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die : they come : they come 440
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.

First Fury.

Prometheus !

Second Fury. Immortal Titan !

Third Fury. Champion of Heaven's slaves !

Prometheus. He whom some dreadful voice invokes
is here,

Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye ? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove ;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate, 450
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

First Fury. We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime : and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

Prometheus. Oh ! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye ; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings. 460
But why more hideous than your loathed selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep ?

Second Fury. We knew not that : Sisters, rejoice,
rejoice !

Prometheus. Can aught exult in its deformity ?

Second Fury. The beauty of delight makes lovers
glad,
Gazing on one another : so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aëreal crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony 470

The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

Prometheus. I laugh your power, and his who sent
you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

First Fury. Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone
from bone,

And nerve from nerve, working like fire within ?

Prometheus. Pain is my element, as hate is thine ;
Ye rend me now : I care not.

Second Fury. Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes ?

Prometheus. I weigh not what ye do, but what ye
suffer, 480

Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

Third Fury. Thou think'st we will live through thee;
one by one,

Like animal life, and though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men :

That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins 490
Crawling like agony ?

Prometheus. Why, ye are thus now ;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

Chorus of Furies.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the
earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its
birth,

Come, come, come !

Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,
When cities sink howling in ruin ; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea, 500

And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck ;

Come, come, come !

Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead ;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes

Fire is left for future burning :
It will burst in bloodier flashes

When ye stir it, soon returning :
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,

510

Misery's yet unkindled fuel :
Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted
To the maniac dreamer ; cruel
More than ye can be with hate
Is he with fear.

Come, come, come !

We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

520

Ione. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

Panthea. These solid mountains quiver with the
sound

Even as the tremulous air : their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

First Fury.

Your call was as a wingèd car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far ;
It rapt us from red gulfs of war.

Second Fury.

From wide cities, famine-wasted ;

Third Fury.

Groans half heard, and blood untasted

Fourth Fury.

Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold ;

530

Fifth Fury.

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A Fury.

Speak not : whisper not :
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought ;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

A Fury.

Tear the veil !

Another Fury.

It is torn.

Chorus.

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne. 540
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan ? We laugh thee to
scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst
for man ?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters ; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.
One came forth of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth ;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look ! where round the wide horizon 550
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.
Hark that outcry of despair !
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled :
Look again, the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled :

The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.

Joy, joy, joy ! 560
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers.
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

Semichorus I.

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now :
See a disenchanted nation
Springs like day from desolation ;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate ; 570
A legions band of linkèd brothers
Whom Love calls children—

Semichorus II.

'Tis another's :
See how kindred murder kin :
'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin :
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within :
Till Despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the FURIES vanish, except one.*]

Ione. Hark, sister ! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep, 580
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him ?

Panthea. Alas ! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

Ione. What didst thou see ?

Panthea. A woful sight : a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

Ione. What next ?

Panthea. The heaven around, the earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles : 590

And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth : those groans are grief enough.

Fury. Behold an emblem : those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

Prometheus. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare ;
Close those wan lips ; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood ; it mingles with thy tears !
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death, 600
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
O, horrible ! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home ;
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind ;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells : 610
Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud ?—
Impaled in lingering fire : and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.

Fury. Blood thou canst see, and fire ; and canst
hear groans ;

Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

Prometheus. Worse ?

Fury. In each human heart terror survives
The ravin it has gorged : the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true : 620
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want : worse need for them.
The wise want love ; and those who love want wisdom ;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.

Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men 630
As if none felt : they know not what they do.

Prometheus. Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd
snakes ;

And yet I pity those they torture not.

Fury. Thou pitiest them ? I speak no more !

[*Vanishes.*

Ah woe !

Prometheus.

Ah woe ! Alas ! pain, pain ever, for ever !
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind.
Thou subtle tyrant ! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good :
I am a God and cannot find it there, 640
Nor would I seek it : for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.

Panthea. Alas ! what sawest thou more ?

Prometheus. There are two woes :

To speak, and to behold ; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords, they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry ;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud, 650
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love !
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them : there was strife, deceit, and fear :
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

The Earth. I felt thy torture, son ; with such mixed
joy

As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind, 660
Its world-surrounding aether : they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future : may they speak comfort to thee !

Panthea. Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!

Ione. And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And, hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?

670

Panthea. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

Chorus of Spirits.

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not.
The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim, and dank, and gray,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;

680

Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

690

Ione. More yet come, one by one: the air around
them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

First Spirit.

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.

From the clut of creeds outworn,
 From the tattered banner torn.
 Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
 There was mingled many a cry—
 Freedom! Honor! Death! Victory!
 Till they faced through the sky:
 And one sound, above, around,
 One sound beneath, around, above,
 Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love:
 'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
 Which begins and ends in thee.

700

Second Spirit.

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
 Which rocked beneath, immovably;
 And the triumphant storm did flee,
 Like a conqueror, swift and proud.
 Between, with many a captive cloud,
 A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
 Each by lightning riven in half:
 I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh:
 Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
 And spread beneath a hell of death
 O'er the white waters. I alit
 On a great ship lightning-split,
 And speeded hither on the sigh
 Of one who gave an enemy
 His plank, then plunged aside to die.

710

720

Third Spirit.

I sate beside a sage's bed,
 And the lamp was burning red
 Near the book where he had fed,
 When a Dream with plumes of flame,
 To his pillow hovering came,
 And I knew it was the same
 Which had kindled long ago
 Pity, eloquence, and woe;
 And the world awhile below
 Wore the shade, its lustre made.

730

It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet :
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

Fourth Spirit.

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept ;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses, 740
But feeds on the aerial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be ;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality !
One of these awakened me, 750
And I sped to succour thee.

Ione.

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Come, as two doves to one beloved nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere ?
And, hark ! their sweet, sad voices ! 'tis despair
Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

Panthea. Canst thou speak, sister ? all my words
are drowned.

Ione. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they
float

On their sustaining wings of skiey grain, 760
Orange and azure deepening into gold :
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

Chorus of Spirits.

Hast thou beheld the form of Love ?

Fifth Spirit.

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide
air's wildernesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-
braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial
tresses :
His footsteps paved the world with light ; but as I
passed 'twas fading,
And hollow Ruin yawned behind : great sages bound
in madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished,
unupbraiding,
Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou,
O King of sadness, 770
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected
gladness.

Sixth Spirit.

Ah, sister ! Desolation is a delicate thing :
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with lulling footstep, and fans with silent
wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and
gentlest bear ;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes
above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy
feet,
Dream visions of aerial joy, and call the monster,
Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom
now we greet.

Chorus.

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be, 780
Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and wingèd steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,

Man and beast, and foul and fair,
Like a tempest through the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

Prometheus. Spirits ! how know ye this shall be ?

Chorus.

In the atmosphere we breathe, 790
As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
From Spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow :
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee. 800

Ione. Where are the Spirits fled ?

Panthea.

Only a sense

Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

Prometheus. How fair these airborne shapes ! and
yet I feel

Most vain all hope but love ; and thou art far,
Asia ! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine 810
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still : alas ! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart ;
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things :
There is no agony, and no solace left ;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more. 820

Panthea. Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

Prometheus. I said all hope was vain but love: thou
lovest.

Panthea. Deeply in truth; but the eastern star
looks white,

And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine:
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow 830
Among the woods and waters, from the æther
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian
Caucasus. ASIA alone.*

Asia. From all the blasts of heaven thou hast
descended:

Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learnt repose: thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream.
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up 10
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.

This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying. come!
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!

The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains : through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake 20
Reflects it : now it wanes : it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air :
'Tis lost ! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers : hear I not
The Aeolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn ? [*PANTHEA enters.*

I feel, I see

Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in
tears,

Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.
Belovèd and most beautiful, who wearest 30
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art ! the spherèd sun had climbed
The sea ; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

Panthea. Pardon, great Sister ! but my wings were
faint

With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Sate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy 40
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine : erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom :
But not as now, since I am made the wind 50
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse ; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest

Was troubled and yet sweet ; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

Asia Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.

Panthea As I have said
With our ser sister at his feet I slept
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes, 60
From the keen ice shielding our linked sleep
Then two dreams came One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
I aint with intoxication of keen joy
' Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me.' 70
I lifted them the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love, which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire, an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all dissolving power,
As the warm aether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood 80
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed, and as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard 90
Of what might be articulate, though still

I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me :
' Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night ?
I always knew what I desired before,
Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
But now I cannot tell thee what I seek ;
I know not ; something sweet, since it is sweet
Even to desire ; it is thy sport, false sister ;
Thou hast discovered some enchantment old, 100
Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
And mingled it with thine : for when just now
We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
Quivered between our intertwining arms.'
I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air : I feel them not : Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul ! 110

Panthea. I lift them though they droop beneath the
load

Of that they would express : what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there ?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless
heaven

Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long, fine lashes ; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

Panthea. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed ?

Asia. There is a change : beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape : 'tis He, arrayed 120

In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.

Prometheus, it is thine ! depart not yet !

Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build o'er the waste world ? The dream is told.

What shape is that between us ? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard

Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,
For through its gray robe gleams the golden dew 130
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

Dream.

Follow ! Follow !

Panthea. It is mine other dream.

Asia.

It disappears.

Panthea. It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost :
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down ;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief, 140
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

Asia.

As you speak, your words

Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among these lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young gray dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind ;
And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently ;
And there was more which I remember not : 150
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW ! as they vanished by ;
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped, as with a withering fire ;
A wind arose among the pines ; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard : O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME !
And then I said : ' Panthea, look on me.' 160
But in the depth of those beloved eyes
Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

Echo.

Follow, follow !

Panthea. The crags, this clear spring morning, mock
our voices

Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind !

Echoes.

O, follow, follow !

Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noontide dew ;
By the forest, lakes, and fountains, 200
Through the many-folded mountains ;
To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now ;
Child of Ocean !

Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.—*A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns. ASIA and PANTHEA pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock listening.*

Semichorus I. of Spirits.

The path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue ;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers 20
Of the green laurel, blown anew ;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone :
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,

It scatters drops of golden light, 20
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite :
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

Semichorus II.

There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake through all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom ;
Another from the swinging blossom, 30
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
'Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute ;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain. 40

Semichorus I.

There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way ;
As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw :
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined soft emotion,— 50
Attracts, impels them ; those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet

The sweet desires within obey :
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying : as they fleet 60
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits
live

Which make such delicate music in the woods ?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft :
Where may they hide themselves ?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell :
I have heard those more skilled in spirits say, 70
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which noontide kindles through the woven leaves ;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed, 80
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odours, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew ?

Second Faun. Ay, many more which we may well
divine.
But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn, 90
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,

And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood : delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.—A PINNACLE OF ROCK AMONG MOUNTAINS.
ASIA and PANTHEA.

Panthea. Hither the sound has borne us—to the
realm

Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication ; and uplift,
Like Maenads who cry loud, *Evœ ! Evœ !*
The voice which is contagion to the world. 10

Asia. Fit throne for such a Power ! Magnificent !
How glorious art thou, Earth ! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth : Wonderful !
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain :
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving in the morning sky, 20
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumèd caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist ;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray, 30

From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
 Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
 The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
 Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines,
 Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
 Awful as silence. Hark ! the rushing snow !
 The sun-awakened avalanche ! whose mass,
 Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
 Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
 As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth 40
 Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
 Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

Panthea. Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
 In crimson foam, even at our feet ! it rises
 As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
 Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

Asia. The fragments of the cloud are scattered up ;
 The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair ;
 Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes ; my brain
 Grows dizzy ; see'st thou shapes within the mist ? 50

Panthea. A countenance with beckoning smiles :
 there burns

An azure fire within its golden locks !
 Another and another : hark ! they speak !

Song of Spirits.

To the deep, to the deep,
 Down, down !

Through the shade of sleep,
 Through the cloudy strife
 Of Death and of Life ;
 Through the veil and the bar
 Of things which seem and are

Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
 Down, down !

While the sound whirls around,
 Down, down !

As the fawn draws the hound,
 As the lightning the vapour,
 As a weak moth the taper ;

Death, despair ; love, sorrow ;
Time both ; to-day, to-morrow ;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone, 70
Down, down !

Through the gray, void abysm,
Down, down !
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crags wear not
The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given.
Where there is One pervading, One alone, 80
Down, down !

In the depth of the deep,
Down, down !
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down !

We have bound thee, we guide thee ; 90
Down, down !
With the bright form beside thee ;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
By that alone.

SCENE IV.—THE CAVE OF DEMOGORGON. ASIA
and PANTHEA.

Panthea. What veiled form sits on that ebon throne ?

Asia. The veil has fallen.

Panthea. I see a mighty darkness

Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech. and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe ;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not ; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song ;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound ;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked, 80
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form. till marble grew divine :
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs.
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars ; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye 90
Gazes not on the interlunar sea :
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean.
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure aether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state.
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain : but who rains down 100
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on.
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone ?
Not Jove : while yet his frown shook Heaven, aye,
when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master ? Is he too a slave ?

Demogorgon. All spirits are enslaved which serve
things evil: 110

Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

Asia. Whom calledst thou God ?

Demogorgon. I spoke but as ye speak,

For Jove is the supreme of living things.

Asia. Who is the master of the slave ?

Demogorgon. If the abysm

Could vomit forth its secrets. . . . But a voice

Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless ;

For what would it avail to bid thee gaze

On the revolving world ? What to bid speak

Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change ? To these

All things are subject but eternal Love. 120

Asia. So much I asked before, and my heart gave

The response thou hast given ; and of such truths

Each to itself must be the oracle.

One more demand ; and do thou answer me

As mine own soul would answer, did it know

That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise

Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world :

When shall the destined hour arrive ?

Demogorgon. Behold !

Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple
night

I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds 130

Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands

A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.

Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,

And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars :

Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink

With eager lips the wind of their own speed,

As if the thing they loved fled on before,

And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks

Stream like a comet's flashing hair : they all

Sweep onward.

Demogorgon. These are the immortal Hours, 140

Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

Asia. A spirit with a dreadful countenance

Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.

Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou ? Whither wouldst thou bear me ?
Speak !

Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect : ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

Asia. What meanest thou ?

Panthea. That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke 151
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo ! it ascends the car ; the coursers fly
Terrified : watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night !

Asia. Thus I am answered : strange !

Panthea. See, near the verge, another chariot stays ;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery ; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope ; 160
How its soft smiles attract the soul ! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

Spirit.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is bright'ning
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam ;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire : and their speed makes night kindle ;
I fear : they outstrip the Typhoon ; 170
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon :
We shall rest from long labours at noon :
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, and the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

Spirit.

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire ;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire :
They shall drink the hot speed of desire !

Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my
breath
Would give them swifter speed.

Spirit. Alas ! it could not.

Panthea. Oh Spirit ! pause, and tell whence is the
light
Which fills this cloud ? the sun is yet unrisen.

Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo 10
Is held in heaven by wonder ; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aerial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

Panthea. Yes, I feel—

Asia. What is it with thee, sister ? Thou art pale.

Panthea. How thou art changed ! I dare not look
on thee ;

I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell 20
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veined shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Aegean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name ; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven

And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them ; till grief cast 30
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came :
Such art thou now ; nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings ? Feelest thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee ? List !

[*Music.*

Asia. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are : yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love, 40
And its familiar voice wears not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God :
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now ; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

Panthea. List ! Spirits speak.

Voice in the Air, singing.

Life of Life ! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them ;
And thy smiles before they dwindle 50
Make the cold air fire ; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light ! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them ;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them ;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others ; none beholds thee, 60
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee

From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever !

Lamp of Earth ! where'er thou movest

Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest

Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing.
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing !

70

Asia.

My soul is an enchanted boat,

Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float

Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing ;

And thine doth like an angel sit

Beside a helm conducting it,

Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.

It seems to float ever, for ever,

Upon that many-winding river,

Between mountains, woods, abysses,

A paradise of wildernesses !

Till, like one in slumber bound,

Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,

Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound :

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions

In music's most serene dominions ;

Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.

And we sail on, away, afar,

Without a course, without a star,

But, by the instinct of sweet music driven ;

Till through Elysian garden islets

By thee, most beautiful of pilots.

Where never mortal pinnace glided,

The boat of my desire is guided :

Realms where the air we breathe is love,

Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,

Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,

And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,

80

90

And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray : 100
 Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
 Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
 Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day ;
 A paradise of vaulted bowers,
 Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
 And watery paths that wind between
 Wildernesses calm and green,
 Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
 And rest, having beheld ; somewhat like thee ;
 Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously ! 110

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Heaven. JUPITER on his Throne ; THETIS
 and the other Deities assembled.*

Jupiter. Ye congregated powers of heaven, who
 share
 The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
 Rejoice ! henceforth I am omnipotent.
 All else had been subdued to me ; alone
 The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
 Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and
 doubt,
 And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
 Hurling up insurrection, which might make
 Our antique empire insecure, though built
 On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear ; 10
 And though my curses through the pendulous air,
 Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
 And cling to it ; though under my wrath's night
 It climbs the crags of life, step after step,
 Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
 It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
 Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall :
 Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
 That fatal child, the terror of the earth,

Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
 Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
 The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
 Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
 To redescend, and trample out the spark.
 Pour forth heaven's wine, Idaean Ganymede,
 And let it fill the Daedal cups like fire.
 And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
 Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
 As dew from earth under the twilight stars :
 Drink ! be the nectar circling through your veins
 The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
 Till exultation burst in one wide voice
 Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis, bright image of eternity !
When thou didst cry, ' Insufferable might !
God ! Spare me ! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence ; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking through its foundations : ' even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Gridding the winds ?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory ! victory ! Feel'st thou not, O world,
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus ?

[*The Car of the HOUR arrives. DEMOGORGON descends, and moves towards the Throne of JUPITER.*]

Awful shape, what art thou ? Speak !
Demogorgon. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
 Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
 I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child ;
 Mightier than thee : and we must dwell together

Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee :
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead, 60
Put forth thy might.

Jupiter. Detested prodigy !
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee ! thou lingerest ?

Mercy ! mercy !
No pity, no release, no respite ! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus ! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world ? What then art thou ?
No refuge ! no appeal !

Sink with me then, 70
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.

Ai ! Ai !
The elements obey me not. I sink 80
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory ! Ai, Ai !

SCENE II.—*The Mouth of a great River in the Island
Atlantis. OCEAN is discovered reclining near the
Shore ; APOLLO stands beside him.*

Ocean. He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's
frown ?

Apollo. Ay, when the strife was ended which made
dim

The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell :
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep. 9

Ocean. He sunk to the abyss ? To the dark void ?

Apollo. An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aerial ice clings over it.

Ocean. Henceforth the fields of heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn 20
Swayed by the summer air ; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles ; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
The floating bark of the light laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea ;
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
And desolation, and the mingled voice 30
Of slavery and command ; but by the light
Of wave reflected flowers, and floating odours,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which
make

My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide ; but list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the morning star.

Ocean. Thou must away ;

Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell : 40

The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
 With azure calm out of the emerald urns
 Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
 Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
 Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
 Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
 With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
 Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.
[A sound of waves is heard.]
 It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
 Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.
Apollo. Farewell. 50

SCENE III.—*Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES,
 IONE, the EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA, and PANTHEA,
borne in the Car with the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.
 HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

Hercules. Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth
 strength
 To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
 And thee, who art the form they animate,
 Minister like a slave.
Prometheus. Thy gentle words
 Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
 And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
 Shadow of beauty unbeheld: and ye,
 Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
 Sweet to remember, through your love and care:
 Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave, 10
 All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
 Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
 And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain
 Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
 From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears
 Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
 Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
 And there is heard the ever-moving air,
 Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,

And bees ; and all around are mossy seats, 20
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass ;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own ;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability ?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile ; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams 30
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence ;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits ; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be ;
And hither come, sped on the charmed winds, 40
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aerial Enna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free ;
And lovely apparitions,—dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright 50
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality—
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of that that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship love, by him and us

Given and returned ; swift shapes and sounds, which
grow 60

More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall :
Such virtue has the cave and place around.

[Turning to the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

Ione. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and
lovely

Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell ; 70
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light :
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there ?

Spirit. It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean :
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

Prometheus. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers : once again
Outspeed the sun around the orlèd world ;
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell, 80
Loosening its mighty music ; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes : then
Return ; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
And thou, O, Mother Earth !—

The Earth. I hear, I feel ;

Their lips are on me, and their touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves ; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
And through my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair 90
Folded in my sustaining arms ; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take

And interchange sweet nutriment ; to me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float 100
Under the stars like balm : night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose :
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy :
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, ' Leave me not again.'

Asia. Oh, mother ! wherefore speak the name of
death ?

Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die ?

The Earth. It would avail not to reply : 110
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life :
They sleep, and it is lifted : and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild, 120
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep.
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou ! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee ; 130
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air

Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around ;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linked ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven, 140
And through their veined leaves and amber stems
The flowers whose purple and transluceid bowls
Stand ever mantling with æreal dew,
The drink of spirits : and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise ! Appear !

[A SPIRIT rises in the likeness of a winged child.

This is my torch-bearer ;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew 150
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Maenad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,
Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
Where ever hes, on unerasing waves, 160
The imago of a temple, built above.
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
And populous with most living imagery,
Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus ; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem ; even as those 170
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope

Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV.—*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.*
PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, and the
SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Ione. Sister, it is not earthly : how it glides
Under the leaves ! how on its head there burns
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair ! how, as it moves,
The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass !
Knowest thou it ?

Panthea. It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets ; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea, 10
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her 20
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reasoned what it saw ; and called her—
For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I—
Mother, dear mother.

The Spirit of the Earth (running to Asia). Mother,
dearest mother ;
May I then talk with thee as I was wont ?
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy ?
May I then play beside thee the long noon,

When work is none in the bright silent air ?

Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth 30
Can cherish thee unenvied : speak, I pray :
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser,
though a child

Cannot be wise like thee, within this day ;
And happier too ; happier and wiser both.
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly
worms,

And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world :
And that, among the haunts of humankind, 40
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man ;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee),
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen. 50
Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it :

A sentinel was sleeping at the gate :

When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all ;
A long, long sound, as it would never end :
And all the inhabitants leaped suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet 60
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves ; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,

Passed floating through the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them ; and those
From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all 70
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again : and when the dawn
Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes,
and efts,

Could e'er be beautiful ? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue :
All things had put their evil nature off :
I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward 80
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky ;
So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste sister
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon
Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What ; as Asia loves Prometheus ? 90

Asia. Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air ?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister
trims her lamp

'Tis hard I should go darkling.

Asia.

Listen ; look !

[*The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters.*

Prometheus. We feel what thou hast heard and seen :
yet speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased
whose thunder filled

The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change : the impalpable thin air 100
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe :
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire ; 110
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel,—
In memory of the tidings it has borne,—
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbaenic snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock 120
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear ?
As I have said, I floated to the earth :
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be ; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things ; but soon I looked, 130
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled ; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
' All hope abandon ye who enter here ; '
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,

Until the subject of a tyrant's will
 Became, worse fate, the abject of his own, 140
 Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
 None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
 Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak ;
 None, with firm sncer, trod out in his own heart
 The sparks of love and hope till there remained
 Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
 And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
 Infecting all with his own hideous ill ;
 None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
 Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes, 150
 Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
 With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
 And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
 As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
 On the wide earth, past ; gentle radiant forms,
 From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
 Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
 Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
 And changed to all which once they dared not be,
 Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride, 160
 Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
 The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
 Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons ; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth 170
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors : mouldering round,
These imaged to the pride of kings and priests
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment ; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,

Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
 Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
 And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,— 180
 Which, under many a name and many a form
 Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
 Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;
 And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
 With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
 Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
 And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
 Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
 Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines :
 The painted veil, by those who were, called life, 190
 Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
 All men believed or hoped, is torn aside ;
 The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
 Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
 Over himself ; just, gentle, wise ; but man
 Passionless ?——no, yet free from guilt or pain,
 Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
 Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves, 200
 From chance, and death, and mutability,
 The clogs of that which else might oversoar
 The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
 Pinnaced dim in the intense inane.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

SCENE.—*A Part of the Forest near the Cave of PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA and IONE are sleeping : they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

Voice of unseen Spirits.

The pale stars are gone !
 For the sun, their swift shepherd,
 To their folds them compelling.
 In the depths of the dawn,

Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye ?

*A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by
confusedly, singing.*

Here, oh, here :
We bear the bier 16
Of the Father of many a cancelled year !
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew !
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew !
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours ! 20

Haste, oh, haste !
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony !

Ione.

What dark forms were they ? 30

Panthea.

The past Hours weak and gray,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

Ione.

Have they passed ?

Panthea.

They have passed ;

They outsped the blast,
While 'tis said, they are fled :

Ione.

Whither, oh, whither ?

Panthea.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

Bright clouds float in heaven, 40
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee !
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth,
But where are ye ?

The pine boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains 50
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea ;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye ?

Ione. What charioteers are these ?

Panthea. Where are their chariots ?

Semichorus of Hours.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep
Which covered our being and darkened our birth
In the deep.

A Voice.

In the deep ?

Semichorus II.

Oh, below the deep. 60

Semichorus I.

An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept,
Found the truth—

Semichorus II.

Worse than his visions were !

Semichorus I.

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep ;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams ;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

Semichorus II.

As the billows leap in the morning beams !

Chorus.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light, 70
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of Night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A Voice.

Unite ! 80

Panthea. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

Chorus of Spirits.

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along ;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

Chorus of Hours.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet, 90
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veiled not ?

Chorus of Spirits.

We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind,
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss, 100
Whose caverns are crystal palaces ;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours !

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses ;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles. 110

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy ;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews her Daedal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears ;
We waded and flew, 120
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm ;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of Spirits and Hours.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure ;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure, 131
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony !

Chorus of Spirits.

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run ;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round. 140

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize :

Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight ;
And Love, Thought, and Breath, 150
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield ;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

Chorus of Hours.

Break the dance, and scatter the song ;
Let some depart, and some remain. 160

Semichorus I.

We, beyond heaven, are driven along :

Semichorus II.

Us the enchantments of earth retain :

Semichorus I.

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

Semichorus II.

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

Semichorus I.

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear 170
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

Semichorus II.

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of Hours and Spirits.

Break the dance, and scatter the song,

Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along

In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,

The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Panthea. Ha ! they are gone !

Ione. Yet feel you no delight, 180
From the past sweetness ?

Panthea. As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky !

Ione. Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound ?

Panthea. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Aeolian modulations.

Ione. Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones, 190
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

Panthea. But see where through two openings in
the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle 200
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts ;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon

The ocean like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air.

Ione. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the Mother of the Months is borne
By ebbing light into her western cave.
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams ;
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy 210
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusk aery veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass ;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genu of the thunderstorm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it ; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind ;
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow, 220
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in stings ; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness ; in its hand 230
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheeled clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

Panthea. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light : 240
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,

Sphere within sphere ; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transpicious, and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on, 250
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light ;
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
Seem kneaded into one æreal mass 260
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

Ione. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

Panthea. And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears 271
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwin'd,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart ;
Infinite mines of adamant and gold, 280
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised

With vegetable silver overspread ;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles ; anchors, beaks of ships ;
Planks turned to marble ; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels 291
Of scythed chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin !
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human ; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes ; prodigious shapes 300
Huddled in gray annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep ; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags ; and over these
The jagged alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once 310
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished ; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried,
' Be not ! ' And like my words they were no more.

The Earth.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness !
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness, 320

The vaporous exultation not to be confined !

Ha ! ha ! the animation of delight

Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

The Moon.

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odour, and deep melody 330
Through me, through me !

The Earth.

Ha ! ha ! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crag, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing
after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction,
sending 340

A solid cloud to rain hot thunderstones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and
blending,—

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow,
and fire ;
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire :

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup 351
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all ;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

The Moon.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine :
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth 360
My cold bare bosom : Oh ! it must be thine
On mine, on mine !

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move :
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of :
'Tis love, all love !

The Earth.

It interpenetrates my granite mass, 370
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever, 380
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows,
fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene. and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth
move :

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs
is poured ; 390
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men ! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress ;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free
wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul, 400
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea ;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love ;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they
could be !

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm 409
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold
mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass :

Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear ;

Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave ; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on !
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air ; 421
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets ? Man unveils me ; I have none.

The Moon.

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep ;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep. 430

The Earth.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a winged mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the moon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

The Moon.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine ;
All suns and constellations shower 440
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine !

The Earth.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth
doth keep.

The Moon.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse, 450
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull ;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered ; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one ;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest 460
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given ;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes ;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move 470
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Maenad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmaean forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace

Of thy soul from hungry space, 480
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a gray and watery mist
Glow like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds, 490
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow—

The Earth.

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm ;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe, 500
Charming the tiger joy, whose trappings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.
Panthea. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.

Ione. Ah me ! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

Panthea. Peace ! peace ! A mighty Power, which
is as darkness, 510
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight : the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,

Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

Panthea. An universal sound like words : Oh, list !

Demogorgon.

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,

Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies, 520

Beautiful orb ! gathering as thou dost roll

The love which paves thy path along the skies :

The Earth.

I hear : I am as a drop of dew that dies.

Demogorgon.

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth

With wonder, as it gazes upon thee ;

Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth

Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony :

The Moon.

I hear : I am a leaf shaken by thee !

Demogorgon.

Ye Kings of suns and stars, Daemons and Gods,

Aetherial Dominations, who possess 530

Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes

Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness :

A Voice from above.

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

Demogorgon.

Ye happy Dead, whom beams of brightest verse

Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray,

Whether your nature is that universe

Which once ye saw and suffered—

A Voice from beneath.

Or as they

Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

Demogorgon.

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead ; from heaven's star-fretted domes 541
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on :

A confused Voice.

We hear : thy words waken Oblivion.

Demogorgon.

Spirits, whose homes are flesh : ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish ; ye living leaves and buds ;
Lightning and wind ; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes :—

A Voice.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave ;
A dupe and a deceiver ; a decay ; 550
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day :

All.

Speak : thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon.

This is the day, which down the void abyss
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep :
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs 560
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance

Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength ;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length ;

These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;

To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;
To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;

Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent ;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

THE CENCI

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS

DEDICATION, TO LEIGH HUNT, Esq

MY DEAR FRIEND—I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published, have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience; they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honourable, innocent and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners I never knew: and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list.

In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you! Your affectionate friend,
PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME, *May* 29, 1819.

PREFACE

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII, in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue¹. Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end,

¹ The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest; and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs, and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her, who has been mingled two centuries with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history, and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept for ever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained as I imagined, but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, *King Lear* and the two plays in which the tale of Oedipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakespeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest

species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself, in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. No dogmas can do more, it is well but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another, and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better, but she would never have been a tragic character the few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification, it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days, or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has

conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.¹

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low, and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects, I have written more carelessly; that is,

¹ An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* of Calderon; the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

without an over fastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter, particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavoured whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is admirable as a work of art—it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features—she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate, the eyebrows are distinct and arched—the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear, her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another—her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and though in part

modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the Chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open-work. One of the gates of the Palace formed of immense stones and leading through a passage, dark and lofty and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.

GIACOMO, }
BERNARDO, } *his Sons.*

CARDINAL CAMILLO.

ORSINO, *a Prelate.*

SAVELLA, *the Pope's Legate.*

OLIMPIO, }
MARZIO, } *Assassins.*

ANDREA, *Servant to Cenci.*

Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.

LUCRETIA, *Wife of CENCI, and Step-mother of his children.*

BEATRICE, *his Daughter.*

The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the Fourth Act to Petrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines.

TIME. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

Enter COUNT CENCI, *and* CARDINAL CAMILLO.

Camillo. That matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.—
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point: he said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live:—

But that the glory and the interest 10
Of the high throne he fills, little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cenci. The third of my possessions—let it go!
Aye, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so! 20
Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life:—it angers me!
Respited me from Hell!—So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope
Clement,

And his most charitable nephews, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the Saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy 30
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of
days

Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards

Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

Camillo.

Oh, Count Cenci !

So much that thou mightst honourably live
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow white and venerable hairs !—
Your children should be sitting round you now, 40
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife ? Where is your gentle daughter ?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs ?
Talk with me, Count,—you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
Watching its bold and bad career, as men 50
Watch meteors, but it vanished not—I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood ; now
Do I behold you in dishonoured age
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

Cenci. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint. 60
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter—
He was accustomed to frequent my house ;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
And asked if I had seen him ; and I smiled :
I think they never saw him any more.

Camillo. Thou execrable man, beware !—

Cenci.

Of thee ?

Nay this is idle :—We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile, 70

It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart—
For you give out that you have half reformed me,
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent
If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury,
All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel—
Flattering then secret peace with others' pain. 80
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's, and that mine.
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish, and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know,
Is as my natural food and rest debarred 90
Until it be accomplished.

Camillo.

Art thou not

Most miserable?

Cenci.

Why, miserable?—

No.—I am what your theologians call
Hardened;—which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought;
While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
Invention palls.—Ay, we must all grow old—
And but that there yet remains a deed to act 100
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine—I'd do—I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets:
Men, by St. Thomas' cannot live like bees,
And I grew tired.—yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth.

Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals, 110
The dry fixed eyeball ; the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

Camillo. Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me :
I thank my God that I believe you not. 120

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

Cenci. Bid him attend me in
The grand saloon. [*Exit ANDREA.*

Camillo. Farewell ; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee. [*Exit CAMILLO.*

Cenci. The third of my possessions ! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons ; 130
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off ;
And meaning if I could to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them !
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned :—then, as to Beatrice—

[*Looking around him suspiciously.*
I think they cannot hear me at that door ;
What if they should ? And yet I need not speak
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear 140
What now I think ! Thou, pavement, which I tread
Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk

Of my imperious step scorning surprise,
But not of my intent !—Andrea !

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. My lord ?

Cenci. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening :—no, at midnight and alone. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter*
BEATRICE and ORSINO, as in conversation.

Beatrice. Pervert not truth,

Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation ;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress ;—two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

Orsino. You said you loved me then.

Beatrice. You are a Priest,
Speak to me not of love.

Orsino. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry. 10
Because I am a Priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep ?

Beatrice. As I have said, speak to me not of love
Had you a dispensation I have not ;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share. 20
Alas, Orsino ! All the love that once
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might ;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein

That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am !
Where shall I turn ? Even now you look on me 30
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah, no ! forgive me ; sorrow makes me seem
Sternier than else my nature might have been ;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forbode,—but what can they forbode
Worse than I now endure ?

Orsino. All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared ? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice ; 40
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

Beatrice. Your zeal for all I wish ;—Ah me, you are
cold !
Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . . (*aside*)
Alas !

Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend !
[*To ORSINO.*

This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino ; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks 50
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees :
Great God ! that such a father should be mine !
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale Mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady ! She expects some happy change 60
In his dark spirit from this act ; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition :
Till when—farewell.

Orsino. Farewell. (*Exit BEATRICE.*) I know the Pope

Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see ; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition :
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister, 70
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration :—
Old men are testy and will have their way ;
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children ;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience 80
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love—a net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no ! A friendless girl
Who clings to me, as to her only hope :—
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye, 90
If she escape me. [Exit.

SCENE III.—*A Magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace.*
A Banquet. Enter CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE,
ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

Cenci. Welcome, my friends and kinsmen ; welcome
ye,
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honours our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And in my absence from your merry meetings
An evil word is gone abroad of me ;
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,

When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
And we have pledged a health or two together, 10
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you ;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

First Guest. In truth, my Lord, you seem too light
of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,
To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.
(*To his Companion.*) I never saw such blithe and open
cheer

In any eye !

Second Guest. Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither ; let us hear it, Count. 20

Cenci. It is indeed a most desired event.
If, when a parent from a parent's heart
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it ;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard—
And suddenly beyond his dearest hope
It is accomplished, he should then rejoice, 30
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment,—
Then honour me thus far—for I am he.

Beatrice (to LUCRETIA). Great God ! How horrible !
Some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers.

Lucretia. Fear not, Child,
He speaks too frankly.

Beatrice. Ah ! My blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

Cenci. Here are the letters brought from Salamanca ;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God ! 40
I thank thee ! In one night didst thou perform,

By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead !—Why, dead !—What means this change of
cheer ?

You hear me not, I tell you they are dead ;
And they will need no food or raiment more :
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad. 50

[*LUCRETIA sinks, half fainting ; BEATRICE supports her.*

Beatrice. It is not true !—Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

Cenci. Ay, as the word of God ; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth ;—
And whose most favouring Providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy, 60
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival ;
All in the self-same hour of the same night ;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December :
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[*The Assembly appears confused ; several of the
guests rise.*

First Guest. Oh, horrible ! I will depart—

Second Guest.

And I.—

Third Guest.

No, stay !

I do believe it is some jest ; though faith ! 71
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado ;
'Tis but to season some such news ; stay, stay !

I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

Cenci (filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up). Oh,
 thou bright wine whose purple splendour leaps
 And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
 Under the lamplight, as my spirits do,
 To hear the death of my accursèd sons ! 80
 Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
 Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
 And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
 Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
 Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
 And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
 Now triumphs in my triumph !—But thou art
 Superfluous ; I have drunken deep of joy,
 And I will taste no other wine to-night.
 Here, Andrea ! Bear the bowl around.

A Guest (rising). Thou wretch !
 Will none among this noble company 91
 Check the abandoned villain ?

Camillo. For God's sake
 Let me dismiss the guests ! You are insane,
 Some ill will come of this.

Second Guest. Seize, silence him !

First Guest. I will !

Third Guest. And I !

Cenci (addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture). Who moves ? Who speaks ?

(turning to the Company)

'tis nothing,

Enjoy yourselves.—Beware ! For my revenge
 Is as the sealed commission of a king
 That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[The Banquet is broken up ; several of the Guests are departing.]

Beatrice. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests ;
 What, although tyranny and impious hate 100
 Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair ?
 What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
 Who tortures them, and triumphs ? What, if we,
 The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,

His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter ? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world ?
O think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear ! O think ! 110
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement !
Have excused much, doubted ; and when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears
To soften him, and when this could not be
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights
And lifted up to God, the Father of all,
Passionate prayers : and when these were not heard
I have still borne,—until I meet you here, 120
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman,
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain,
Camillo, thou art chief justiciary,
Take us away !

Cenci. (*He has been conversing with CAMILLO during the first part of BEATRICE'S speech ; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.*) I hope my good friends here

Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps 130
Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

Beatrice (*not noticing the words of Cenci*). Dare no one
look on me ?

None answer ? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men ?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit ?
O God ! That I were buried with my brothers !
And that the flowers of this departed spring

Were fading on my grave ! And that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all ! 140

Camillo. A bitter wish for one so young and gentle ;
Can we do nothing ?

Colonna. Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy :
Yet I would second any one.

A Cardinal. And I.

Cenci. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl !

Beatrice. Retire thou, impious man ! Aye, hide
thyself

Where never eye can look upon thee more !
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience
Who art a torturer ? Father, never dream
Though thou mayst overbear this company, 150
But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me !
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy
seat !

Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step :
Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

Cenci. My friends, I do lament this insane girl 160
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.

Good night, farewell ; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.

Another time.— [*Exeunt all but CENCI and BEATRICE.*
My brain is swimming round ;

Give me a bowl of wine ! [*To BEATRICE.*

Thou painted viper !

Beast that thou art ! Fair and yet terrible !

I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,

Now get thee from my sight ! [*Exit BEATRICE.*

Here, Andrea,

Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening ; but I must ; 170
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail

With thinking what I have decreed to do.—

[*Drinking the wine.*]

Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy ;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink ! The charm works well ;
It must be done ; it shall be done, I swear ! [Exit.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter*
LUCRETIA and BERNARDO.

Lucretia. Weep not, my gentle boy ; he struck but
me
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O God, Almighty, do Thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only Thee !
Yet weep not ; thought I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

Bernardo. O more, more,
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me ! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep ! 10

Lucretia. Alas ! Poor boy, what else couldst thou
have done ?

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice (in a hurried voice). Did he pass this way ?
Have you seen him, brother ?
Ah, no ! that is his step upon the stairs ;
'Tis nearer now ; his hand is on the door ;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A duteous child, now save me ! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost Thou indeed abandon me ? He comes ;

The door is opening now ; I see his face ;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night.

20

Enter a Servant.

Almighty God, how merciful Thou art !
'Tis but Orsino's servant.—Well, what news ?

Servant. My master bids me say, the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened.

[Giving a paper.]

And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
To visit you again ?

Lucretia. At the Ave Mary. *[Exit Servant.]*
So, daughter, our last hope has failed ; Ah me !
How pale you look ; you tremble, and you stand
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation, 30
As if one thought were over strong for you :
Your eyes have a chill glare ; O, dearest child !
Are you gone mad ? If not, pray speak to me.

Beatrice. You see I am not mad : I speak to you.

Lucretia. You talked of something that your father
did

After that dreadful feast ? Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried, ' My sons are dead ! '
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he ?

At the first word he spoke I felt the blood 40
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance ;
And when it passed I sat all weak and wild ;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride ; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.

Until this hour thus have you ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence : your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence :
What can have thus subdued it ? What can now 50
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear ?

Beatrice. What is it that you say ? I was just thinking

"Twere better not to struggle any more.

Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,

Yet never—Oh ! Before worse comes of it

"Twere wise to die : it ends in that at last.

Lucretia. Oh, talk not so, dear child ! Tell me at once

What did your father do or say to you ?

He stayed not after that accursèd feast 60

One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

Bernardo. Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us !

Beatrice (*speaking very slowly with a forced calmness*).

It was one word, Mother, one little word ;

One look, one smile. (*Wildly.*) Oh ! He has trampled me

Under his feet, and made the blood stream down

My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all

Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh

Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,

And we have eaten.—He has made me look

On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust 70

Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,

And I have never yet despaired—but now !

What could I say ? [Recovering herself.]

Ah, no ! 'tis nothing new.

The sufferings we all share have made me wild :

He only struck and cursed me as he passed ;

He said, he looked, he did ;—nothing at all

Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.

Alas ! I am forgetful of my duty,

I should preserve my senses for your sake.

Lucretia. Nay, Beatrice ; have courage, my sweet girl,

If any one despairs it should be I 81

Who loved him once, and now must live with him

Till God in pity call for him or me.

For you may, like your sister, find some husband,

And smile, years hence, with children round your knees :

Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil

Shall be remembered only as a dream.

Beatrice. Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died ?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy ? 90
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us ?
And shall I now desert you ? May the ghost
Of my dead Mother plead against my soul
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more, even, than a mother's love !

Bernardo. And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live 100
In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, Mother !

Lucretia. My dear, dear children !

Enter CENCI, suddenly.

Cenci. What, Beatrice here !
Come hither ! [*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*]
Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair ;

Look up ! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant ; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain. 110

Beatrice (willyly, staggering towards the door). O that
the earth would gape ! Hide me, O God !

Cenci. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you—from this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind ;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber ! 120
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,
[*To BERNARDO.*]

Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!

[*Exeunt* BEATRICE and BERNARDO.

(*Aside.*) So much has passed between us as must
make

Me bold, her fearful.—'Tis an awful thing

To touch such mischief as I now conceive:

So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,

And try the chill stream with their feet; once in . . .

How the delighted spirit pants for joy!

Lucretia (*advancing timidly towards him*). O husband!

Pray forgive poor Beatrice.

She meant not any ill.

Cenci.

Nor you perhaps?

130

Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by
rote

Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?

Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred

Enmity up against me with the Pope?

Whom in one night merciful God cut off:

Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.

You were not here conspiring? You said nothing

Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;

Or be condemned to death for some offence,

And you would be the witnesses?—This failing, 140

How just it were to hire assassins, or

Put sudden poison in my evening drink?

Or smother me when overcome by wine?

Seeing we had no other judge but God,

And He had sentenced me, and there were none

But you to be the executioners

Of His decree enregistered in Heaven?

Oh, no! You said not this?

Lucretia.

So help me God,

I never thought the things you charge me with!

Cenci. If you dare speak that wicked lie again 150

I'll kill you. What! It was not by your counsel

That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?

You did not hope to stir some enemies

Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn

What every nerve of you now trembles at?

You judged that men were bolder than they are ;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

Lucretia. Look not so dreadfully ! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed ;
Nor do I think she designed any thing 160
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

Cenci. Blaspheming liar ! You are damned for this !
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you :
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things—not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out : you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella :
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about :
Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers 170
Never told tales ; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak.—Why do you
linger ?

Make speediest preparation for the journey !

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.]

The all-beholding sun yet shines ; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets ;
I see the bright sky through the window panes :
It is a garish, broad, and peering day ;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears,
And every little corner, nook, and hole
Is penetrated with the insolent light. 180

Come darkness ! Yet, what is the day to me ?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day ?
'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror : if there be a sun in heaven
She shall not dare to look upon its beams ;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night ;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me : I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air, 190
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done ! [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter CAMILLO and GIACOMO, in conversation.*

Camillo. There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing—

Giacomo. Nothing more ? Alas !
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and agèd, sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade ? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman 10
Is heir to all his incapacities ;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require ?—

Camillo. Nay, there is reason in your plea ; 'twere
hard.

Giacomo. 'Tis hard for a firm man to bear : but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father 20
Without a bond or witness to the deed :
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world ;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose
And stretch authority beyond the law ?

Camillo. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check 30
Your father's cruel hand ; he frowned and said,
' Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart ;

His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality.

40

Enter ORSINO.

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.

Orsino. What words ?

Giacomo. Alas, repeat them not again !
There then is no redress for me, at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink.—But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on the meanest slave
What these endure ; shall they have no protection ?

50

Camillo. Why, if they would petition to the Pope

I see not how he could refuse it—yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.

I pray you now excuse me. I have business

That will not bear delay.

[Exit CAMILLO.]

Giacomo. But you, Orsino,
Have the petition : wherefore not present it ?

Orsino. I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers, and urgent interest ;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle
Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal :
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

60

Giacomo. My friend, that palace-walking devil Gold
Has whispered silence to his Holiness :

And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.

70

What should we do but strike ourselves to death ?

For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,

Or I would— *[Stops abruptly.*

Orsino. What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover :
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves ;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree ;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile ;
A father who is all a tyrant seems, 80
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

Giacomo. Ask me not what I think ; the unwilling
brain

Feigns often what it would not ; and we trust
Imagination with such phantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words,
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye.—My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

Orsino. But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day, 90
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected—

Giacomo. Spare me now !
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care. 100
Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell !
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

Orsino. Farewell !—Be your thoughts better or more
bold. *[Exit GIACOMO.*

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement :

It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will 110
Dangerous secrets : for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes :
So Cenci fell into the pit ; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can ; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.

(After a pause.) Now what harm 120

If Cenci should be murdered ?—Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me ? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action ? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words ;
And such is Cenci : and while Cenci lives
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice !
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee 130
Could but despise danger and gold and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it ! There is no escape . . .
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire ;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head
My hot palm scorches it : her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant ; and thus unprofitably 140
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours :
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo

I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all :
Her father dead ; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave ;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating 150
From the dread manner of her wish achieved :
And she !—Once more take courage, my faint heart ;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee ?
I have such foresight as assures success :
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions ; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts 160
Till it become his slave . . . as I will do. [Exit.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

LUCRETIA, to her enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. (*She enters staggering, and speaks wildly.*)

Reach me that handkerchief !—My brain is hurt ;
My eyes are full of blood ; just wipe them for me . . .
I see but indistinctly . . .

Lucretia. My sweet child,
You have no wound ; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow . . . Alas ! Alas !
What has befallen ?

Beatrice. How comes this hair undone ?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible !
The pavement sinks under my feet ! The walls
Spin round ! I see a woman weeping there, 10
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels. . . . My God !
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood !

The sunshine on the floor is black ! The air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe
In charnel pits ! Pah ! I am choked ! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me . . . 'tis substantial, heavy, thick,
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another, 20
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life !
My God ! I never knew what the mad felt
Before ; for I am mad beyond all doubt !
(*More wildly.*) No, I am dead ! These putrefying
limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air !

[*A pause.*

What hideous thought was that I had even now ?
'Tis gone ; and yet its burthen remains here 30
O'er these dull eyes . . . upon this weary heart !
O, world ! O, life ! O, day ! O, misery !

Lucretia. What ails thee, my poor child ? She
answers not :

Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause ; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung . . .

Beatrice (frantically). Like Parricide . . .

Misery has killed its father : yet its father
Never like mine . . . O, God ! What thing am I ?

Lucretia. My dearest child, what has your father
done ?

Beatrice (doubtfully). Who art thou, questioner ?

I have no father. 40

(*Aside.*) She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.

[*To LUCRETIA, in a slow, subdued voice.*

Do you know

I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair ;

At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined . . . no, it cannot be ! 50
Horrible things have been in this wide world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill ; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As . . . [*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*]

Who art thou ? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest . . . Mother !
Lucretia. Oh !

My sweet child, know you . . .
Beatrice. Yet speak it not :
For then if this be truth, that other too 60
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace ;
Thou art Lucretia ; I am Beatrice.
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me : from this point of time,
I am . . . [*Her voice dies away faintly.*]

Lucretia. Alas ! What has befallen thee, child ?
What has thy father done ?

Beatrice. What have I done ?
Am I not innocent ? Is it my crime 70
That one with white hair, and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years,
As parents only dare, should call himself
My father, yet should be !—Oh, what am I ?
What name, what place, what memory shall be mine ?
What retrospects, outliving even despair ?

Lucretia. He is a violent tyrant, surely, child :
We know that death alone can make us free ;
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury ? 80

Thou art unlike thyself ; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

Beatrice. 'Tis the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done ;
What, yet I know not . . . something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it ;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying 90
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done :
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never anything will move me more.
But now !—O blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime, and punishment
By which I suffer . . . no, that cannot be !
Many might doubt there were a God above 100
Who sees and permits evil, and so die :
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

Lucretia. It must indeed have been some bitter
wrong ;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

Beatrice. I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak ?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me : I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up 110
In its own formless horror : of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear ? For there is none to tell
My misery : if another ever knew •
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death ! Death ! Our law and our religion call thee

A punishment and a reward . . . Oh, which
Have I deserved ?

Lucretia. The peace of innocence ;
Till in your season you be called to heaven. 120
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

Beatrice. Ay, death . . .
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of Thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what Thou abhorrest 130
May mock Thee, unavenged . . . it shall not be !
Self-murder . . . no, that might be no escape,
For Thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it :—O ! In this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO.

(She approaches him solemnly.) Welcome, Friend !
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

Orsino. And what is he who has thus injured you ?

Beatrice. The man they call my father : a dread
name.

Orsino. It cannot be . . .

Beatrice. What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been ;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die ; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness 150

Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak !

Orsino. Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

Beatrice. Oh, ice-hearted counsellor !
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer ; and that done,
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core ; ay, lay all bare
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story ;
A mock, a byword, an astonishment :— 160
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech ;
Scarce whispered, unimagined, wrapped
In hideous hints . . . Oh, most assured redress !

Orsino. You will endure it then ?

Beatrice. Endure ?—*O*rsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.

[*Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.*
Ay,

All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist 170
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other ?

Orsino. Should the offender live ?
Triumph in his misdeed ? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element ; until thou mayst become
Utterly lost ; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest ?

Beatrice (to herself). Mighty death !
Thou double-visaged shadow ? Only judge !
Rightfullest arbiter ! [*She retires absorbed in thought.*

Lucretia. If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge . . . 180

Orsino. Blaspheme not ! His high Providence
commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs

Into the hands of men ; if they neglect
To punish crime . . .

Lucretia. But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power ?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble ? If because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief ? O God !
If, for the very reasons which should make 190
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs ?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer ?

Orsino. Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

Lucretia. How ?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not . . . but I think it might be good
To . . .

Orsino. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice ;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her 200
Only one duty, how she may avenge :
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured ;
Me, but one counsel . . .

Lucretia. For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need. [*BEATRICE advances.*]

Orsino. Then . . .

Beatrice. Peace, Orsino !
And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life, 210
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement ; both for what is past,

And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
And be . . . what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will, 220
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino ? False or true ?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

Orsino. I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.

Lucretia. You think we should devise
His death ?

Beatrice. And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

Orsino. And yet most cautious.

Lucretia. For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy 230
For that which it became themselves to do.

Beatrice. Be cautious as ye may, but prompt.

Orsino.
What are the means ?

Orsino. I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

Lucretia. To-morrow before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines. 240
If he arrive there . . .

Beatrice. He must not arrive.

Orsino. Will it be dark before you reach the tower ?

Lucretia. The sun will scarce be set.

Beatrice. But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine ; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice ;

And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony 250
With which it clings seems slowly coming down ;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life ; yet clinging, leans ;
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall : beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns . . . below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm ; and high above there grow, 260
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines ; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

Orsino. Before you reach that bridge make some
excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until . . .

Beatrice. What sound is that ?

Lucretia. Hark ! No, it cannot be a servant's step ;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly 270
Returned . . . Make some excuse for being here.

Beatrice. (*To ORSINO, as she goes out.*) That step we
hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

[*Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.*]

Orsino. What shall I do ?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither : let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter GLACOMO, in a hurried manner.

How ! Have you ventured hither ? Know you then
That Cenci is from home ?

Giacomo. I sought him here ;
And now must wait till he returns.

Orsino. Great God ! 280
Weigh you the danger of this rashness ?

Giacomo. Ay !
Does my destroyer know his danger ? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man ; the oppressor to the oppressed ;
The slanderer to the slandered ; foe to foe :
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame ;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold ;
I ask not happy years ; nor memories 290
Of tranquil childhood ; nor home-sheltered love ;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more ;
But only my fair fame ; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee,
Or I will . . . God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man ?

Orsino. Be calm, dear friend.

Giacomo. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me, 300
And then denied the loan ; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,
And my wife smiled ; and my heart knew repose.
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together 310
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness ; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us

Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry ; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot ; and he saw 320
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too : but soon returned again ;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
' Give us clothes, father ! Give us better food !
What you in one night squander were enough
For months ! ' I looked, and saw that home was hell.
And to that hell will I return no more 331
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
I will, reversing Nature's law . . .

Orsino. Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.

Giacomo. Then . . . Are you not my friend ?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together ?
My wrongs were then less. That word parricide, 340
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

Orsino. It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it : what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.

Giacomo. Is he dead ?

Orsino. His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

Giacomo. What outrage ?

Orsino. That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do, 350
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief

Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,
 And her severe unmodulated voice,
 Drowning both tenderness and dread ; and last
 From this ; that whilst her step-mother and I,
 Bewildered in our horror, talked together
 With obscure hints ; both self-misunderstood
 And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
 Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
 She interrupted us, and with a look 360
 Which told before she spoke it, he must die : . . .

Giacomo. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased ;
 There is a higher reason for the act
 Than mine ; there is a holier judge than me,
 A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
 Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
 Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
 A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
 With needless tears ! Fair sister, thou in whom
 Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom 370
 Did not destroy each other ! Is there made
 Ravage of thee ? O, heart, I ask no more
 Justification ! Shall I wait, Orsino,
 Till he return, and stab him at the door ?

Orsino. Not so ; some accident might interpose
 To rescue him from what is now most sure ;
 And you are unprovided where to fly,
 How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen :
 All is contrived ; success is so assured
 That . . .

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. 'Tis my brother's voice ! You know me
 not ? 380

Giacomo. My sister, my lost sister !

Beatrice. Lost indeed !

I see Orsino has talked with you, and
 That you conjecture things too horrible
 To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
 He might return : yet kiss me ; I shall know
 That then thou hast consented to his death.

Farewell, farewell ! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts 389
Make thine hard, brother. Answer not . . . farewell.
[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A mean Apartment in GIACOMO's House.*
GIACOMO alone.

Giacomo. 'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.
[*Thunder, and the sound of a storm.*]

What ! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man ? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-winged lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep :
They are now living in unmeaning dreams :
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which is most necessary. O,
Thou un replenished lamp ! whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge 10
Devouring darkness hovers ! Thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls.
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
As thou hadst never been ! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine :
But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha ! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold :
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks 20
Into the white and yellow spasms of death :
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgement seat !

[*A bell strikes.*
One ! Two !

The hours crawl on ; and when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse ;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news

Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great; 30
Yet . . . 'tis Orsino's step . . .

Enter ORSINO.

Speak !

Orsino. I am come
To say he has escaped.

Giacomo. Escaped !

Orsino. And safe
Within Petrella. He passed by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

Giacomo. Are we the fools of such contingencies ?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act ? Then wind and
thunder,

Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness ! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done 40
But my repentance.

Orsino. See, the lamp is out.

Giacomo. If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever ?
No, I am hardened.

Orsino. Why, what need of this ?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed ? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp ; let us not talk i' the dark. 50

Giacomo (lighting the lamp). And yet once quenched
I cannot thus relume

My father's life : do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God ?

Orsino. Once gone
You cannot now recall your sister's peace ;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope ;
Nor your wife's bitter words ; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes ;

Nor your dead mother ; nor . . .

Giacomo. O, speak no more !

I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it. 60

Orsino. There is no need of that. Listen : you
know

Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time ; him whom your father
Degraded from his post ? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due ?

Giacomo. I knew Olimpio ; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

Orsino. Marzio's hate 70
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

Giacomo. Only to talk ?

Orsino. The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death : ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end . . .

Giacomo. Listen ! What sound is that ?

Orsino. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack :
nought else.

Giacomo. It is my wife complaining in her sleep :
I doubt not she is saying bitter things 81
Of me ; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

Orsino. Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

Giacomo. If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands . . .

Orsino. Why, that were well. I must be gone;
good-night. 90

When next we meet—may all be done!

Giacomo.

And all

Forgotten: Oh, that I had never been! [*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella.*

Enter CENCI.

Cenci. She comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay: yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? Keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? Tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will 10
Which by its own consent shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Thou loathèd wretch!

Hide thee from my abhorrence: fly, begone!

Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucretia.

Oh,

Husband! I pray for thine own wretched sake
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell, 20
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage: so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts if worse there be.

Cenci. What ! like her sister who has found a home
To mock my hate from with prosperity ?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair. 30

Lucretia. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy
presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance ;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
'Cenci must die ! Let him confess himself !
Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart !'

Cenci. Why—such things are . . .
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above, 39
For when I cursed my sons they died.—Ay . . . so . . .
As to the right or wrong, that's talk . . . repentance . . .
Repentance is an easy moment's work
And more depends on God than me. Well . . . well . . .
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.

[*A pause ; LUCRETIA approaches anxiously,
and then shrinks back as he speaks.*

One, two ;

Ay . . . Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled : and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave :
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming : to Bernardo, 50
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna,
I will pile up my silver and my gold ;
My costly robes, paintings and tapestries ;
My parchments and all records of my wealth,

And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name ; 60
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of him who wielded it ;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound ;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure . . . [Going.

Lucretia. (*Stops him.*) Oh, stay ! It was a feint :
She had no vision, and she heard no voice. 71
I said it but to awe thee.

Cenci. That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie !
For Beatrice worse terrors are in store
To bend her to my will.

Lucretia. Oh ! to what will ?
What cruel sufferings more than she has known
Canst thou inflict ?

Cenci. Andrea ! Go call my daughter,
And if she comes not tell her that I come.
What sufferings ? I will drag her, step by step, 80
Through infamies unheard of among men :
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be . . . What ? Canst thou
guess ?

She shall become (for what she most abhors
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others ; and when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God, 90
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds ;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth ;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God

Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. The Lady Beatrice . . .

Cenci. Speak, pale slave ! What
Said she ?

Andrea. My Lord, 'twas what she looked ; she said :
'Go tell my father that I see the gulf
Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,
I will not.'
[*Exit ANDREA.*

Cenci. Go thou quick, Lucretia, 100
Tell her to come ; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent : and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her. [*Exit LUCRETIA.*
Ha !

With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity ? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak ? For I on them 110
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Well ; what ? Speak, wretch !

Lucretia. She said, 'I cannot come ;
Go tell my father that I see a torrent
Of his own blood raging between us.'

Cenci (kneeling). God !
Hear me ! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which Thou hast made my daughter ; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being ;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me ; this devil
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant 120
To aught good use ; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world ;

If nursed by Thy selectest dew of love
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray Thee for my sake,
As Thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all ; reverse that doom !
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains ! Heaven, rain upon her head 130
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad ; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathed lameness ! All-beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams !

Lucretia.

Peace ! Peace !

For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.

When high God grants He punishes such prayers.

*Cenci (leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards
Heaven).* He does His will, I mine ! This in
addition,

That if she have a child . . .

Lucretia.

Horrible thought ! 140

Cenci. That if she ever have a child ; and thou,
Quick Nature ! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation ! May it be
A hideous likeness of herself, that as
From a distorting mirror, she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
And that the child may from its infancy 150
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery :
And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural.
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.
Shall I revoke this curse ? Go, bid her come,

Before my words are chronicled in Heaven.

[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy. 160

Enter LUCRETIA.

What? Speak!

Lucretia. She bids thee curse;
And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul . . .

Cenci. She would not come. 'Tis well,
I can do both: first take what I demand,
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee: and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey. 170

[*Exit* LUCRETIA,

It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! Oh, thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of Heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go 180
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel: and then . . .
O, multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall with a spirit of unnatural life
Stir and be quickened . . . even as I am now. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Before the Castle of Petrella. Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA above on the Ramparts.*

Beatrice. They come not yet.

Lucretia. 'Tis scarce midnight,

Beatrice. How slow

Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed time !

Lucretia. The minutes pass . . .

If he should wake before the deed is done ?

Beatrice. O, mother ! He must never wake again.

What thou hast said persuades me that our act

Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell

Out of a human form.

Lucretia. 'Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgement with strange confidence

For one so wicked ; as a man believing

In God, yet recking not of good or ill.

And yet to die without confession ! . . .

Beatrice. Oh !

Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,

And will not add our dread necessity

To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO, below.

Lucretia. See,

They come.

Beatrice. All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.

[Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE from above.]

Olimpio. How feel you to this work ?

Marzio. As one who thinks

A thousand crowns excellent market price

For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

Olimpio. It is the white reflection of your own,
Which you call pale.

Marzio. Is that their natural hue ?

Olimpio. Or 'tis my hate and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

Marzio. You are inclined then to this business ?

Olimpio. Ay.

If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE and LUCRETIA, below.

Noble ladies!

Beatrice. Are ye resolved?

Olimpio. Is he asleep?

Marzio. Is all

Quiet?

Lucretia. I mixed an opiate with his drink: 30
He sleeps so soundly . . .

Beatrice. That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed?

Olimpio. We are resolved.

Marzio. As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

Beatrice. Well, follow!

Olimpio. Hush! Hark! What noise is that?

Marzio. Ha! some one comes!

Beatrice. Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to
rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate, 40
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the Castle. Enter
BEATRICE and LUCRETIA.*

Lucretia. They are about it now.

Beatrice. Nay, it is done.

Lucretia. I have not heard him groan.

Beatrice. He will not groan.

Lucretia. What sound is that?

Beatrice. List! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.

Lucretia. My God !
If he be now a cold stiff corpse . . .
Beatrice. O, fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone :
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

Is it accomplished ?

Marzio. What ?
Olimpio. Did you not call ?
Beatrice. When ?
Olimpio. Now.
Beatrice. I ask if all is over ?
Olimpio. We dare not kill an old and sleeping man ;
His thin gray hair, his stern and reverend brow, 10
His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.
Marzio. But I was bolder ; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave
And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, ' God ! hear, O, hear,
A father's curse ! ' What, art Thou not our Father ? '
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

Beatrice. Miserable slaves !
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone ? Base palterers !
Cowards and traitors ! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation : it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men ;
And when a deed where mercy insults Heaven . . . 30
Why do I talk ?

[*Snatching a dagger from one of them and raising it.*

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
' She murdered her own father ! '—I must do it !

But never dream ye shall outlive him long !

Olimpio. Stop, for God's sake !

Marzio. I will go back and kill him.

Olimpio. Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

Beatrice. Take it ! Depart ! Return !

[*Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.*

How pale thou art !

We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime

To leave undone.

Lucretia. Would it were done !

Beatrice. Even whilst

That doubt is passing through your mind, the world

Is conscious of a change. Darkness and Hell 40

Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth

To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath

Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood

Runs freely through my veins. Hark !

Enter OLIMPIO and MARZIO.

He is . . .

Olimpio. Dead !

Marzio. We strangled him that there might be no blood ;

And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden

Under the balcony ; 'twill seem it fell.

Beatrice (*giving them a bag of coin*). Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes.

And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed

By that which made me tremble, wear thou this ! 50

[*Clothes him in a rich mantle.*

It was the mantle which my grandfather

Wore in his high prosperity, and men

Envied his state : so may they envy thine.

Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God

To a just use. Live long and thrive ! And, mark,

If thou hast crimes, repent : this deed is none.

[*A horn is sounded.*

Lucretia. Hark, 'tis the castle horn ; my God ! it sounds

Like the last trump.

Beatrice. Some tedious guest is coming.

Lucretia. The drawbridge is let down ; there is a tramp

Of horses in the court ; fly, hide yourselves ! 60

[*Exeunt OLIMPIO and MARZIO.*]

Beatrice. Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest ;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now :
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm : all ill is surely past. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—*Another Apartment in the Castle. Enter on one side the LEGATE SAVELLA, introduced by a Servant, and on the other LUCRETIA and BERNARDO.*

Savella. Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci ; doth he sleep ?

Lucretia (in a hurried and confused manner). I think
he sleeps ;

Yet wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile,
He is a wicked and a wrathful man ;
Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well ; indeed it were not well.

Wait till day break . . . (*aside*) O, I am deadly sick ! 10

Savella. I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly ; such my commission is.

Lucretia (with increased agitation). I dare not rouse
him : I know none who dare . . .

'Twere perilous ; . . . you might as safely waken
A serpent ; or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

Savella. Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

Lucretia (aside). O, terror ! O, despair !

(To BERNARDO.) Bernardo, conduct you the Lord
Legate to
Your father's chamber. 20

[*Exeunt* SAVELLA and BERNARDO.]

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice. 'Tis a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

Lucretia. Oh, agony of fear!
Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means
Which we must pay so dearly, having done. 30
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact;
O, horrible, 'tis all discovered!

Beatrice. Mother,
What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself, 40
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me, 50
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock
But shakes it not. [*A cry within and tumult.*
Voices. Murder! Murder! Murder!

Enter BERNARDO and SAVELLA.

Savella (to his followers). Go search the castle round ;
sound the alarm ;

Look to the gates that none escape !

Beatrice.

What now ?

Bernardo. I know not what to say . . . my father's
dead.

Beatrice. How ; dead ! he only sleeps ; you mistake,
brother.

His sleep is very calm, very like death ;

'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.

He is not dead ?

Bernardo. Dead ; murdered.

Lucretia (with extreme agitation). Oh no, no,

He is not murdered though he may be dead ; 60

I have alone the keys of those apartments.

Savella. Ha ! Is it so ?

Beatrice.

My Lord, I pray excuse us ;

We will retire ; my mother is not well :

She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.

[Exeunt LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

Savella. Can you suspect who may have murdered
him ?

Bernardo. I know not what to think.

Savella.

Can you name any

Who had an interest in his death ?

Bernardo.

Alas !

I can name none who had not, and those most

Who most lament that such a deed is done ;

My mother, and my sister, and myself.

70

Savella. 'Tis strange ! There were clear marks of
violence.

I found the old man's body in the moonlight

Hanging beneath the window of his chamber,

Among the branches of a pine : he could not

Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped

And effortless ; 'tis true there was no blood . . .

Favour me, Sir ; it much imports your house

That all should be made clear ; to tell the ladies

That I request their presence.

[Exit BERNARDO.]

Enter GUARDS bringing in MARZIO.

Guard. We have one.

Officer. My lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt 81
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci:
Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore
A gold-inwoven robe, which shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon
Betrayed them to our notice: the other fell
Desperately fighting.

Savella. What does he confess?

Officer. He keeps firm silence; but these lines found
on him
May speak.

Savella. Their language is at least sincere. [*Reads.*

'To the Lady Beatrice. 90

'That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare write. . . .

'Thy devoted servant, Orsino.'

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and BERNARDO.

Knowest thou this writing, Lady?

Beatrice. No.

Savella. Nor thou?

Lucretia. (*Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.*) Where was it found? What is it? It should be

Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror
Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

Savella. Is it so?

100

Is it true, Lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

Beatrice. Not hate, 'twas more than hate:
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

Savella. There is a deed demanding question done ;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

Beatrice. What sayest ? My Lord, your words are
bold and rash.

Savella. I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

Lucretia. O, not to Rome ! Indeed we are not guilty.

Beatrice. Guilty ! Who dares talk of guilt ? My
Lord, III

I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless . . . Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What ! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things 120
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits ? 'Tis ye are culprits ! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it ? Unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

Savella. You own

That you desired his death ?

Beatrice. It would have been 130

A crime no less than his, if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'Tis true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
Ay, I even knew . . . for God is wise and just,
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven . . . now what of this ?

Savella. Strange thoughts beget strange deeds ; and
here are both :

I judge thee not.

Beatrice. And yet, if you arrest me, 140
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life : the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide ;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free ; stain not a noble house 150
With vague surmises of rejected crime ;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum : let them have been enough :
Leave us the wreck we have.

Savella. I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome :
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

Lucretia. O, not to Rome ! O, take us not to
Rome !

Beatrice. Why not to Rome, dear mother ? There
as here

Our innocence is as an armèd heel
To trample accusation. God is there 160
As here, and with His shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured and the weak ;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean
On me ; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot, as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother ; will you come ?

Lucretia. Ha ! they will bind us to the rack, and
wrest 170

Self-accusation from our agony !
Will Giacomo be there ? Orsino ? Marzio ?
All present ; all confronted ; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing

Which is in every heart! O, misery!

[*She faints, and is borne out.*]

Savella. She faints: an ill appearance this.

Beatrice.

My Lord,

She knows not yet the uses of the world.

She fears that power is as a beast which grasps

And loosens not: a snake whose look transmutes

All things to guilt which is its nutriment.

180

She cannot know how well the supine slaves

Of blind authority read the truth of things

When written on a brow of guilelessness:

She sees not yet triumphant Innocence

Stand at the judgement-seat of mortal man,

A judge and an accuser of the wrong

Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord;

Our suite will join yours in the court below. [*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in ORSINO'S Palace. Enter
ORSINO and GIACOMO.*

Giacomo. Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?

O, that the vain remorse which must chastise

Crimes done, had but as loud a voice to warn

As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!

O, that the hour when present had cast off

The mantle of its mystery, and shown

The ghastly form with which it now returns

When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds

Of conscience to their prey! Alas! Alas!

It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,

10

To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

Orsino. It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

Giacomo. To violate the sacred doors of sleep;

To cheat kind Nature of the placid death

Which she prepares for overwearied age;

To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes . . .

Orsino. You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

Giacomo. O, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance 20
The mirror of my darkest thoughts ; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire . . .

Orsino. 'Tis thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve ;
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence ; confess 'tis fear disguised 30
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe ?

Giacomo. How can that be ? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

Orsino. I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

Giacomo. Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What ! will you cast by self-accusing flight 40
Assured conviction upon Beatrice ?
She, who alone in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends ; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety ;
Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime, 50
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,

Orsino sent me to Petrella ; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.

First Judge. This sounds as bad as truth. Guards,
there,
Lead forth the prisoner !

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, *guarded.*

Look upon this man ; 20
When did you see him last ?

Beatrice. We never saw him.

Marzio. You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

Beatrice. I know thee ! How ? where ? when ?

Marzio. You know 'twas I

Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold
And bade me thrive : how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

[*BEATRICE advances towards him ; he
covers his face, and shrinks back.*

Oh, dart

The terrible resentment of those eyes 30
On the dead earth ! Turn them away from me !
They wound : 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this let me be led to death.

Beatrice. Poor wretch, I pity thee : yet stay awhile.

Camillo. Guards, lead him not away.

Beatrice. Cardinal Camillo,

You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom : can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this ?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart
And bade to answer, not as he believes, 41
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply :

And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told : ' Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew ; that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life : '—and though 50
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,
Yet you would say, ' I confess anything : '
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonourable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.

Camillo (much moved). What shall we think, my
Lords ?

Shame on these tears ! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul 61
That she is guiltless.

Judge. Yet she must be tortured.

Camillo. I would as soon have tortured mine own
nephew

(If he now lived he would be just her age ;
His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes
Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy !

Judge. Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness 71
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law ; nay even
To stretch a point against the criminals.
The prisoners stand accused of parricide
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

Beatrice. What evidence ? This man's ?

Judge.

Even so.

Beatrice (to MARZIO). Come near. And who art thou
thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men
To kill the innocent ?

Marzio. I am Marzio, 80
Thy father's vassal.

Beatrice. Fix thine eyes on mine ;
Answer to what I ask. [*Turning to the JUDGES.*

I prithee mark
His countenance : unlike bold calumny
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.

(To MARZIO.) What ! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father ?

Marzio. Oh !
Spare me ! My brain swims round . . I cannot
speak . . .

It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away ! Let her not look on me ! 90
I am a guilty miserable wretch ;
I have said all I know ; now, let me die !

Beatrice. My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern, as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed ; this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the hilt,
Lying unscathed amid a world of foes, 100
For my own death ? That with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution, as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory ? What is his poor life ?
What are a thousand lives ? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust ; and, see, he lives !
(*Turning to MARZIO.*) And thou . . .

Marzio. Oh, spare me ! Speak to me no more !
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,

Wound worse than torture.

(*To the JUDGES.*) I have told it all; 110
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

Camillo. Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice,
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

Beatrice. O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay:
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,
And so my lot was ordered, that a father 120
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul;
And my untainted fame; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart;
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great father, who in pity and love,
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation; 130
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth:
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: 'My maker,
I have done this and more; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
And because she endured what never any
Guilty or innocent endured before: 140
Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought;
Because thy hand at length did rescue her;
I with my words killed her and all her kin.'
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,

Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood 150
All that which shows like innocence, and is,
Hear me, great God ! I swear, most innocent,
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask : Am I, or am I not
A parricide ?

Marzio. Thou art not !

Judge. What is this ?

Marzio. I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

Judge. Drag him away to torments ; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds 161
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

Marzio. Torture me as ye will :
A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent !
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me ;
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin. [*Exit MARZIO, guarded.*]

Camillo. What say ye now, my Lords ?

Judge. Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind. 170

Camillo. Yet stained with blood.

Judge (to BEATRICE). Know you this paper, Lady ?

Beatrice. Entrap me not with questions. Who
stands here

As my accuser ? Ha ! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge ? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one ? Here is Orsino's name ;
Where is Orsino ? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl ? Alas ! ye know not what,
And therefore on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us ?

Enter an Officer.

Officer.

Marzio's dead.

Judge. What did he say ?

Officer. Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,
As one who baffles a deep adversary ;
And holding his breath, died.

Judge. There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners,
Who yet remain stubborn.

Camillo. I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

Judge. Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Mean-
while
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells ;
And be the engines ready : for this night
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE is
discovered asleep on a couch. Enter BERNARDO.

Bernardo. How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay me !
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus ... wake ! awake !
What, sister, canst thou sleep ?

Beatrice (awaking). I was just dreaming
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.

Bernardo. Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream ! O God !
How shall I tell ?

Beatrice. What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother ?

Bernardo. Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst

I stand considering what I have to say
My heart will break.

Beatrice. See now, thou mak'st me weep :
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

Bernardo. They have confessed ; they could endure
no more 20

The tortures . . .

Beatrice. Ha ! What was there to confess ?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty ? O white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not !

Enter JUDGE with LUCRETIA and GIACOMO, guarded.

Ignoble hearts !
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust ? 30
And that eternal honour which should live
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a byword ? What !
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts ? Shall the light multitude 40
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave . . . what memory of our having been ?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair ? O thou,
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child ! Let not her wrongs kill thee !
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse ;

It soon will be as soft as any grave. 50
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

Giacomo. They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains :
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

Lucretia. Oh, speak the truth ! Let us all quickly
die ;
And after death, God is our judge, not they ;
He will have mercy on us.

Bernardo. If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine ;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

Judge. Confess, or I will warp 60
Your limbs with such keen tortures . . .

Beatrice. Tortures ! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel !
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed . . . not me !
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
And of the soul ; ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves.
And with considering all the wretched life 70
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine ; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these ; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed . . . such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me ?

Judge. Art thou not guilty of thy father's death ?
Beatrice. Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That He permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which He beheld ; 80
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death ?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,

Which either I have done, or have not done ;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will ;
No other pains shall force another word.

Judge. She is convicted, but has not confessed. 90
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here !

Beatrice. Oh, tear him not away !

Judge. Guards, do your duty.

Bernardo (embracing BEATRICE). Oh ! would ye
divide

Body from soul ?

Officer. That is the headsman's business.

[*Exeunt all but LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO.*

Giacomo. Have I confessed ? Is it all over now ?
No hope ! No refuge ! O weak, wicked tongue
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first ! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister ; 100
Ay, thee ! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world, to that which I
So well deserve ! My wife ! my little ones !
Destitute, helpless, and I . . . Father ! God !
Canst Thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus ! . . .

[*Covers his face and weeps.*

Lucretia. O my child !

To what a dreadful end are we all come !
Why did I yield ? Why did I not sustain
Those torments ? Oh, that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears, 110
Which flow and feel not !

Beatrice. What 'twas weak to do,
'Tis weaker to lament, once being done ;
Take cheer ! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of His wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.

Brother, sit near me ; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up ! Bear up !
O dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile : 120
Your eyes look pale, hollow and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad ; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live : lie down !
So, that will do. Have I forgot the words ?
Faith ! They are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep 130
When my life is laid asleep ?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier !
Farewell ! Heigho !
What is this whispers low ?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear ;
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain ; 140
When to wake ? Never again.
O World ! Farewell !
Listen to the passing bell !
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart.

[The scene closes.

SCENE IV.—*A Hall of the Prison. Enter CAMILLO
and BERNARDO.*

Camillo. The Pope is stern ; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts ; a marble form,

A rite, a law, a custom : not a man.
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice :
' Which among ye defended their old father 10
Killed in his sleep ? ' Then to another : ' Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place ; 'tis well.'
He turned to me then, looking deprecation.
And said these three words, coldly : ' They must
die.'

Bernardo. And yet you left him not ?

Camillo. I urged him still ;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied : ' Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife 20
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon ; stay a moment ;
Here is their sentence ; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled.'

Bernardo. O God, not so ! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks 30
To bend the sternest purpose ! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears ?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy ? I will do it ! 40
Oh, wait till I return ! *[Rushes out.]*

Camillo,

Alas ! poor boy !

A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, and GIACOMO, guarded.

Beatrice. I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

Camillo. May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

Beatrice (wildly). O
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground! 50
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be . . .
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there
should be

No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit, 60
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in gray hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? Even though dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe, 70
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of Death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?

Lucretia.

Trust in God's sweet love,

The tender promises of Christ : ere night,
Think, we shall be in Paradise.

Beatrice.

'Tis past !

Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill :
How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I 80
Have met with much injustice in this world ;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God,
I hope I do trust in Him. In whom else
Can any trust ? And yet my heart is cold.

[*During the latter speeches GIACOMO has retired
conversing with CAMILLO, who now goes
out ; GIACOMO advances.*

Giacomo. Know you not, Mother . . . Sister, know
you not ? 90

Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

Lucretia.

Child, perhaps

It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years :
Oh, what a thought ! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

Beatrice.

Yet both will soon be cold.

Oh, trample out that thought ! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope :
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp and narrow hour 100
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring :
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free ;
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man !
Cruel, cold, formal man ; righteous in words,

In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die ;
Since such is the reward of innocent lives ; 110
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep ; 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms !
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now . . .

BERNARDO rushes in.

Bernardo. Oh, horrible ! 120
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain ! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one . . . What if 'twere fancy ?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life ! O world !
Cover me ! let me be no more ! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence 130
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust ! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .
Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark ! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister ; and thou, Mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .
Dead ! The sweet bond broken !

Enter CAMILLO and Guards.

They come ! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted . . . white . . . cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice ! Oh, let me hear 140
You speak !

Beatrice. Farewell, my tender brother. Think

Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now :
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child :
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us ; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow 151
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do ; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !

Bernardo. I cannot say, farewell !

Camillo. Oh, Lady Beatrice !

Beatrice. Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair 160
In any simple knot ; ay, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another ; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

THE END.

THE MASK OF ANARCHY

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE
MASSACRE AT MANCHESTER

I

As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

II

I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh—
Very smooth he looked, yet grim ;
Seven blood hounds followed him :

III

All were fat ; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

10

IV

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown ;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

V

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

20

VI

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

VII

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

VIII

Last came Anarchy : he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood ;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

30

IX

And he wore a kingly crown ;
And in his grasp a sceptre shone ;
On his brow this mark I saw—
' I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW ! '

X

With a pace stately and fast,
Over English land he passed,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

40

XI

And a mighty troop around,
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword,
For the service of their Lord.

XII

And with glorious triumph, they
Rode through England proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.

XIII

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed the Pageant swift and free,
Tearing up, and trampling down ;
Till they came to London town. 50

XIV

And each dweller, panic-stricken,
Felt his heart with terror sicken
Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

XV

For with pomp to meet him came,
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired murderers, who did sing 60
'Thou art God, and Law, and King.

XVI

'We have waited, weak and lone
For thy coming, Mighty One !
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold.'

XVII

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed ;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering—'Thou art Law and God.'—

XVIII

Then all cried with one accord, 70
'Thou art King, and God, and Lord ;
Anarchy, to thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now !'

XIX

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,
Bowed and grinned to every one,
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

XX

For he knew the Palaces
Of our Kings were rightly his ;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
And the gold-inwoven robe.

80

XXI

So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned Parliament

XXII

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said :
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air :

XXIII

' My father Time is weak and gray
With waiting for a better day ;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands !

90

XXIV

' He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me—
Misery, oh, Misery ! '

XXV

Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses' feet,
Expecting, with a patient eye,
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

120

XXVI

When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose,
Small at first, and weak, and frail
Like the vapour of a vale :

XXVII

Till as clouds grow on the blast,
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

XXVIII

It grew—a Shape arrayed in mail 110
Brighter than the viper's scale,
And upborne on wings whose grain
Was as the light of sunny rain.

XXIX

On its helm, seen far away,
A planet, like the Morning's, lay;
And those plumes its light rained through
Like a shower of crimson dew.

XXX

With step as soft as wind it passed
O'er the heads of men—so fast
That they knew the presence there, 120
And looked,—but all was empty air.

XXXI

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,
As waves arise when loud winds call,
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

XXXII

And the prostrate multitude
Looked—and ankle-deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien :

XXXIII

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth, 130
Lay dead earth upon the earth ;
The Horse of Death tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

XXXIV

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
 A sense awakening and yet tender
 Was heard and felt—and at its close
 These words of joy and fear arose

XXXV

As if their own indignant Earth
 Which gave the sons of England birth
 Had felt their blood upon her brow,
 And shuddering with a mother's throes

L40

XXXVI

Had turned every drop of blood
 By which her face had been bedewed
 To an accent unwitlistood,—
 As if her heart had cried aloud :

'Men of England, heirs of Glory,
 Heroes of unwritten story,
 Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
 Hopes of her, and one another ;

150

XXXVIII

'Rise like Lions after slumber
 In unvanquishable number,
 Shake your chains to earth like dew
 Which in sleep had fallen on you—
 Ye are many—they are few.

XXXIX

'What is Freedom?—ye can tell
 That which slavery is, too well—
 For its very name has grown
 To an echo of your own.

XL

''Tis to work and have such pay
 As just keeps life from day to day
 In your limbs, as in a cell
 For the tyrants' use to dwell,

160

XLI

'So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment.

XLII

' 'Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak,
When the winter winds are bleak,—
They are dying whilst I speak.

170

XLIII

' 'Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye ;

XLIV

' 'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousandfold
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.

XLV

' Paper coin—that forgery
Of the title-deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

180

XLVI

' 'Tis to be a slave in soul
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

XLVII

' And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain
'Tis to see the Tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you—
Blood is on the grass like dew.

190

XLVIII

' Then it is to feel revenge
 Fiercely thirsting to exchange
 Blood for blood—and wrong for wrong—
 Do not thus when ye are strong.

XLIX

' Birds find rest, in narrow nest
 When weary of their wingèd quest ;
 Beasts find fare, in woody lair
 When storm and snow are in the air.

' Asses, swine, have litter spread
 And with fitting food are fed ;
 All things have a home but one—
 Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none !

LI

' This is Slavery—savage men,
 Or wild beasts within a den
 Would endure not as ye do—
 But such ills they never knew.

LII

' What art thou, Freedom ? O ! could slaves
 Answer from their living graves 211
 This demand—tyrants would flee
 Like a dream's dim imagery :

LIII

' Thou art not, as impostors say,
 A shadow soon to pass away,
 A superstition, and a name
 Echoing from the cave of Fame.

' For the labourer thou art bread,
 And a comely table spread
 From his daily labour come
 In a neat and happy home.

LV

'Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude—
No—in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.

LVI

'To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

LVII

'Thou art Justice—ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England—thou
Shield'st alike the high and low.

230

LVIII

'Thou art Wisdom—Freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which Priests make such ado.

LIX

'Thou art Peace—never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

240

LX

'What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood ?
It availed, Oh, Liberty,
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

LXI

'Thou art Love—the rich have kissed
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee.

LXII

' Or turn their wealth to arms, and make 250
War for thy belovèd sake
On wealth, and war, and fraud—whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

LXIII

' Science, Poetry, and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

LXIV

' Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless
Art thou—let deeds, not words, express 260
Thine exceeding loveliness.

' Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

LXVI

' Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be
Witness the solemnity.

LXVII

' From the corners uttermost 270
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village, and town
Where those who live and suffer moan
For others' misery or their own,

LXVIII

' From the workhouse and the prison
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old
Groan for pain, and weep for cold—

LXIX

' From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife 280
With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares—

LXX

' Lastly from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around

LXXI

' Those prison halls of wealth and fashion,
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wail
As must make their brethren pale— 290

LXXII

' Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold—

' Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free—

LXXIV

' Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords, 300
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

' Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry

LXXVI

' Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

310

' Let the fixed bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood
Looking keen as one for food.

LXXVIII

' Let the horsemen's scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

LXXIX

' Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war,

320

LXXX

' And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armed steeds
Pass, a disregarded shade
Through your phalanx undismayed.

LXXXI

' Let the laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute,

330

LXXXII

' The old laws of England—they
Whose reverend heads with age are gray,
Children of a wiser day ;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo—Liberty !

LXXXIII

' On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state
Rest the blood that must ensue,
And it will not rest on you.

LXXXIV

' And if then the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew,—
What they like, that let them do.

340

LXXXV

' With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise.
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.

LXXXVI

' Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

350

LXXXVII

' Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand—
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.

LXXXVIII

' And the bold, true warriors
Who have hugged Danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company.

LXXXIX

' And that slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

360

XO

' And these words shall then become
Like Oppression's thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again—again—again—

' Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few.'

370

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE

THE spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree ;
The silk-worm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding sheet and cradle ever weaves ;
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought—
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day—
But a soft cell, where when that fades away, 10
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which must remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win 20
Its way over the sea, and sport therein ;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan :—or the quick-
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk, or Heretic,
Or those in philanthropic council met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed to Jesus Christ for their salvation,
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation 30
To Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest,

When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
 On Freedom's hearth, grew dim with Empire :—
 With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and
 jag,

Which fishers found under the utmost crag
 Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,
 Where to the sky the rude sea rarely smiles
 Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
 When the exulting elements in scorn, 40
 Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
 Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,
 As panthers sleep ;—and other strange and dread
 Magical forms the brick floor overspread,—
 Proteus transformed to metal did not make
 More figures, or more strange ; nor did he take
 Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
 Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
 Of tin and iron not to be understood ;
 And forms of unimaginable wood, 50
 To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood :
 Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and groovèd
 blocks,

The elements of what will stand the shocks
 Of wave and wind and time.—Upon the table
 More knacks and quips there be than I am able
 To catalogize in this verse of mine :—
 A pretty bowl of wood—not full of wine,
 But quicksilver ; that dew which the gnomes drink
 When at their subterranean toil they swink,
 Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who 60
 Reply to them in lava—cry halloo !
 And call out to the cities o'er their head,—
 Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead,
 Crash through the chinks of earth—and then all quaff
 Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
 This quicksilver no gnome has drunk—within
 The walnut bowl it lies, veinèd and thin,
 In colour like the wake of light that stains
 The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
 The inmost shower of its white fire—the breeze 70

Is still—blue Heaven smiles over the pale seas.
 And in this bowl of quicksilver—for I
 Yield to the impulse of an infancy
 Outlasting manhood—I have made to float
 A rude idealism of a paper boat:—
 A hollow screw with cogs—Henry will know
 The thing I mean and laugh at me,—if so
 He fears not I should do more mischief.—Next
 Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,
 With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint 80
 Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
 Then comes a range of mathematical
 Instruments, for plans nautical and statical;
 A heap of rosin, a queer broken glass
 With ink in it;—a china cup that was
 What it will never be again, I think,—
 A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
 The liquor doctors rail at—and which I
 Will quaff in spite of them—and when we die
 We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea, 90
 And cry out,—‘ Heads or tails ? ’ where’er we be.
 Near that a dusty paint-box, some odd hooks,
 A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
 Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
 To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
 Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
 Of figures,—disentangle them who may.
 Baron de Tott’s Memoirs beside them lie,
 And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
 Near those a most inexplicable thing, 100
 With lead in the middle—I’m conjecturing
 How to make Henry understand; but no—
 I’ll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
 This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
 Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
 Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
 The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
 Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind

The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
 Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
 Ruffling the ocean of their self-content ;—
 I sit—and smile or sigh as is my bent,
 But not for them—Libeccio rushes round
 With an inconstant and an idle sound,
 I heed him more than them—the thunder-smoke
 Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak
 Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare ;
 The ripe corn under the undulating air
 Undulates like an ocean ;—and the vines
 Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines—
 The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
 The empty pauses of the blast ;—the hill
 Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
 And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
 The interrupted thunder howls ; above
 One chasm of Heaven smiles, like the eye of Love
 On the unquiet world ;—while such things are,
 How could one worth your friendship heed the war
 Of worms ? the shriek of the world's carrion jays,
 Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise ?

You are not here ! the quaint witch Memory sees,
In vacant chairs, your absent images,
And points where once you sat, and now should be
But are not.—I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met ;—and she replies,
Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes ;
' I know the past alone—but summon home
My sister Hope,—she speaks of all to come.'
But I, an old diviner, who knew well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In citing every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion—how on the sea-shore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather ;
How I ran home through last year's thunder-storm,

And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek—and how we often made 150
Feasts for each other, where good will outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As well it might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be ;—and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not :—or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe, and sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world :—and then anatomize 160
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years ;—or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are—
Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not ;—or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme,—in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps ;—or how we sought 170
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining their sacred waters with our tears ;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed !
Or how I, wisest lady ! then endued
The language of a land which now is free,
And, winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
' My name is Legion ! '—that majestic tongue 180
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations ; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion ;—thou wert then to me
As is a nurse—when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the aethereal way,

Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
 Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast 190
 Out of the forest of the pathless past
 These recollected pleasures ?

You are now

In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
 At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
 Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
 Yet in its depth what treasures ! You will see
 That which was Godwin,—greater none than he
 Though fallen—and fallen on evil times—to stand
 Among the spirits of our age and land,
 Before the dread tribunal of *to come* 200
 The foremost,—while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb,
 You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure
 In the exceeding lustre and the pure
 Intense irradiation of a mind,
 Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
 Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
 A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
 A hooded eagle among blinking owls.—
 You will see Hunt—one of those happy souls
 Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom 210
 This world would smell like what it is—a tomb ;
 Who is, what others seem ; his room no doubt
 Is still adorned with many a cast from Shout,
 With graceful flowers tastefully placed about ;
 And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
 And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung ;
 The gifts of the most learned among some dozens
 Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.
 And there is he with his eternal puns,
 Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns 220
 Thundering for money at a poet's door ;
 Alas ! it is no use to say, ' I'm poor ! '
 Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
 Things wiser than were ever read in book,
 Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness.—
 You will see Hogg,—and I cannot express
 His virtues,—though I know that they are great,

Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit ;—of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit. 230
He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep ;—and there
Is English Peacock, with his mountain Fair,
Turned into a Flamingo ;—that shy bird
That gleams i' the Indian air—have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him ?—but you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope
Matched with this cameleopard—his fine wit 240
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it ;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots ; let his page,
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation.—Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge ; all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith.—And these, 250
With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on,—are all
You and I know in London.

I recall

My thoughts, and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air—
What see you ?—unpavilioned Heaven is fair,
Whether the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep ; 260
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many-wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them dim and fast :—
All this is beautiful in every land.—
But what see you beside ?—a shabby stand
Of Hackney coaches—a brick house or wall

Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
 Of our unhappy politics ;—or worse—
 A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
 Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade, 270
 You must accept in place of serenade—
 Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring
 To Henry, some unutterable thing.
 I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
 Built round dark caverns, even to the root
 Of the living stems that feed them—in whose bowers
 There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers ;
 Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
 Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne
 In circles quaint, and ever-changing dance, 280
 Like wingèd stars the fire-flies flash and glance,
 Pale in the open moonshine, but each one
 Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
 A meteor tamed ; a fixed star gone astray
 From the silver regions of the milky way ;—
 Afar the Contadino's song is heard,
 Rude, but made sweet by distance—and a bird
 Which cannot be the Nightingale, and yet
 I know none else that sings so sweet as it
 At this late hour ;—and then all is still— 290
 Now—Italy or London, which you will !

Next winter you must pass with me ; I'll have
 My house by that time turned into a grave
 Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
 And all the dreams which our tormentors are ;
 Oh ! that Hunt, Hogg, Peacock, and Smith were there
 With everything belonging to them fair !—
 We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek ;
 And ask one week to make another week
 As like his father, as I'm unlike mine, 300
 Which is not his fault, as you may divine.
 Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
 Yet let's be merry : we'll have tea and toast ;
 Custards for supper, and an endless host
 Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,

And other such lady-like luxuries,—
Feasting on which we will philosophize !
And we'll have fires out of the Grand Duke's wood,
To thaw the six weeks' winter in our blood.
And then we'll talk ;—what shall we talk about ? 310
Oh ! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descant ;—as to nerves—
With cones and parallelograms and curves
I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare
To bother me—when you are with me there.
And they shall never more sip laudanum,
From Helicon or Himeros ;—well, come,
And in despite of God and of the devil,
We'll make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time ; till buds and flowers 320
Warn the obscure inevitable hours,
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew ;—
'To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.'

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

TO MARY

(ON HER OBJECTING TO THE FOLLOWING POEM, UPON THE
SCORE OF ITS CONTAINING NO HUMAN INTEREST)

I

How, my dear Mary,—are you critic-bitten
(For vipers kill, though dead) by some review,
That you condemn these verses I have written,
Because they tell no story, false or true ?
What, though no mice are caught by a young kitten,
May it not leap and play as grown cats do,
Till its claws come ? Pruthee, for this one time,
Content thee with a visionary rhyme.

II

What hand would crush the silken-wingèd fly,
The youngest of inconstant April's minions, 10
Because it cannot climb the purest sky,
Where the swan sings, amid the sun's dominions ?
Not thine. Thou knowest 'tis its doom to die,
When Day shall hide within her twilight pinions
The lucent eyes, and the eternal smile,
Serene as thine, which lent it life awhile.

III

To thy fair feet a wingèd Vision came,
Whose date should have been longer than a day,
And o'er thy head did beat its wings for fame,
And in thy sight its fading plumes display ; 20
The watery bow burned in the evening flame,
But the shower fell, the swift Sun went his way—
And that is dead.—O, let me not believe
That anything of mine is fit to live !

IV

Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years
 Considering and retouching Peter Bell;
 Watering his laurels with the killing tears
 Of slow, dull care, so that their roots to Hell
 Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the spheres
 Of Heaven, with dewy leaves and flowers; this well
 May be, for Heaven and Earth conspire to foil 31
 The over-busy gardener's blundering toil.

V

My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature
 As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise
 Clothes for our grandsons—but she matches Peter,
 Though he took nineteen years, and she three days
 In dressing. Light the vest of flowing metre
 She wears; he, proud as dandy with his stays,
 Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress 39
 Like King Lear's 'looped and windowed raggedness.'

VI

If you strip Peter, you will see a fellow
 Scorched by Hell's hyperequatorial climate
 Into a kind of a sulphureous yellow:
 A lean mark, hardly fit to fling a rhyme at;
 In shape a Scaramouch, in hue Othello.
 If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
 Can shrive you of that sin,—if sin there be
 In love, when it becomes idolatry.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

I

BEFORE those cruel Twins, whom at one birth
 Incestuous Change bore to her father Time, 50
 Error and Truth, had hunted from the Earth
 All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
 And left us nothing to believe in, worth
 The pains of putting into learned rhyme,
 A lady-witch there lived on Atlas' mountain ,
 Within a cavern, by a secret fountain. /

II

Her mother was one of the Atlantides :

The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden

In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas

So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden 60

In the warm shadow of her loveliness ;—

He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden

The chamber of gray rock in which she lay—

She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

III

'Tis said, she first was changed into a vapour,

And then into a cloud, such clouds as flit,

Like splendour-wingèd moths about a taper,

Round the red west when the sun dies in it :

And then into a meteor, such as caper

On hill-tops when the moon is in a fit : 70

Then, into one of those mysterious stars

Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

IV

Ten times the Mother of the Months had bent

Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden

With that bright sign the billows to indent

The sea-deserted sand—like children chidden,

At her command they ever came and went—

Since in that cave a dewy splendour hidden

Took shape and motion : with the living form

Of this embodied Power, the cave grew warm. 80

V

A lovely lady garmented in light

From her own beauty—deep her eyes, as are

Two openings of unfathomable night

Seen through a Temple's cloven roof—her hair

Dark—the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,

Picturing her form ; her soft smiles shone afar,

And her low voice was heard like love, and drew

All living things towards this wonder new.

VI

And first the spotted cameleopard came,
And then the wise and fearless elephant ; 90
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes interwolved ;—all gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.
They drank before her at her sacred fount ;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

VII

The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death ; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know 100
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

VIII

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew
Came, blithe, as in the olive copses thick
Cicadae are, drunk with the noonday dew :
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
Teasing the God to sing them something new ; 110
Till in this cave they found the lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

IX

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there,
And though none saw him,—through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
And through those living spirits, like a want,
He passed out of his everlasting lair
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous lady all alone,—
And she felt him, upon her emerald throne. 120

X

And every nymph of stream and spreading tree,
 And every shepherdess of Ocean's flocks,
 Who drives her white waves over the green sea,
 And Ocean with the brine on his gray locks,
 And quaint Priapus with his company,
 All came, much wondering how the enwombèd rocks
 Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth ;—
 Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

XI

The herdsmen and the mountain maidens came,
 And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant— 130
 Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
 Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt :
 Pigmies, and Polyphemes, by many a name,
 Centaurs, and Satyrs, and such shapes as haunt
 Wet clefts,—and lumps neither alive nor dead,
 Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

XII

For she was beautiful—her beauty made
 The bright world dim, and everything beside
 Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade :
 No thought of living spirit could abide, 140
 Which to her looks had ever been betrayed,
 On any object in the world so wide,
 On any hope within the circling skies,
 But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

XIII

Which when the lady knew, she took her spindle
 And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three
 Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
 The clouds and waves and mountains with ; and she
 As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle
 In the belated moon, wound skilfully ; 150
 And with these threads a subtle veil she wove—
 A shadow for the splendour of her love.

XIV

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures—sounds of air,
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of crystal silence there ;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
Will never die—yet ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone. 160

XV

And there lay Visions swift, and sweet, and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath, like a chrysalis,
Some eager to burst forth, some weak and faint
With the soft burthen of intensest bliss
It was its work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's :—and others white, green, gray, and black,
And of all shapes—and each was at her beck.

XVI

And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept, 170
Clipped in a floating net, a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept;
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans ; and each was an adept,
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds,
To stir sweet thoughts or sad, in destined minds.

XVII

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams—or if eyes needs must weep, 180
Could make their tears all wonder and delight,
She in her crystal vials did closely keep :
If men could drink of those clear vials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

XVIII

Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice ;
And which might quench the Earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood—till men should live and move 191
Harmonious as the sacred stars above ;

XIX

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of Wisdom's wizard skill ;
Time, earth, and fire—the ocean and the wind,
And all their shapes—and man's imperial will ;
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of Love—let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain. 200

XX

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower ;
Carved lamps and chalices, and vials which shone
In their own golden beams—each like a flower,
Out of whose depth a fire-fly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

XXI

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister, 210
Clothing themselves, or with the ocean foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind ; such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run,
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

XXII

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads, with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks, 220
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarled heart of stubborn oaks,
So they might live for ever in the light
Of her sweet presence—each a satellite.

XXIII

‘This may not be,’ the wizard maid replied ;
‘The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair, at length are drained and dried ;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide ;
The boundless ocean like a drop of dew 230
Will be consumed—the stubborn centre must
Be scattered, like a cloud of summer dust.

XXIV

‘And ye with them will perish, one by one ;—
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay—oh, ask not me
To love you till your little race is run ;
I cannot die as ye must—over me
Your leaves shall glance—the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth, and so—farewell !’—

XXV

She spoke and wept :—the dark and azure well 241
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circle where they fell
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light :—a knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing Forms, o’er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

XXVI

All day the wizard lady sate aloof,
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity, 250
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven—and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy.

XXVII

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal wood, rare gums, and cinnamon;
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is—
Each flame of it is as a precious stone 260
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze upon.
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

XXVIII

This lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain—as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance;
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fire-flies—and withal did ever keep 270
The tenour of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet, and folded palm.

XXIX

And when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She passed at dewfall to a space extended,
Where in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire—full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim. 280

XXX

Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor
In many a mimic moon and bearded star
O'er woods and lawns ;—the serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and dreaming still, he crept afar—
And when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

XXXI

She had a boat, which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star ; 290
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter : from a car
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

XXXII

And others say, that, when but three hours old,
The first-born Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun Chaos with his wings of gold,
And like a horticultural adept, 300
Stole a strange seed, and wrapped it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

XXXIII

The plant grew strong and green, the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance ; woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan— 310
Of which Love scooped this boat—and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

XXXIV

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftmess into it.
Couched on the fountain like a panther tame,
One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit—
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame—
Or on blind Homer's heart a wingèd thought,—
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

320

XXXV

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love—all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass ;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow—
A living Image, which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

XXXVI

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both,—
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked ;
The bosom swelled lightly with its full youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

330

XXXVII

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipped with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere :
She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored, and said : ' Sit
here ! '
And pointed to the prow, and took her seat
Beside the rudder, with opposing feet.

340

XXXVIII

And down the streams which clove those mountains
vast,

Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests, whose shade cast
Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom, the pinnace passed ;

By many a star-surrounded pyramid 350
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

XXXIX

The silver noon into that winding dell,

With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell ;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell,

When Earth over her face Night's mantle wraps ;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky. 360

XL

And ever as she went, the Image lay

With folded wings and unawakened eyes ;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play

The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,

And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which, with busy murmur vain,
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

XLI

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud

Upon a stream of wind, the pinnace went : 370
Now lingering on the pools, in which abode

The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused ; now o'er the shallow road

Of white and dancing waters, all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles :—mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

XLII

And down the earthquaking cataracts which shiver
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear 380
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled—the circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

XLIII

And when the wizard lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale,
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend—
She called ‘Hermaphroditus!’—and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale 390
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

XLIV

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions,
With stars of fire spotting the stream below ;
And from above into the Sun’s dominions
Flinging a glory, like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-wingèd minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime,
With which frost paints the pines in winter time. 400

XLV

And then it winnowed the Elysian air
Which ever hung about that lady bright,
With its aethereal vans—and speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,
The pinnace, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

XLVI

The water flashed, like sunlight by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to Heaven ; 410
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains ; loosely driven
The lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro :
Beneath, the billows having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

XLVII

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,
The lady-witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit ; but sailed forth under the light 420
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
Its storm-outspeeding wings, the Hermaphrodite ;
She to the Austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocana,—

XLVIII

Where, like a meadow which no scytæ has shaven,
Which rain could never bend, or whirl-blast shake,
With the Antarctic constellations paven,
Canopus and his crew, lay the Austral lake—
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make 430
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by :

XLIX

A haven beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably,
And around which the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags, and like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed in with rifts and precipices gray,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay. 440

L

And whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the wind's scourge, foamed like a wounded thing,
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightning flash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder-smoke—this haven
Was as a gem to copy Heaven engraven,—

LI

On which that lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star, 450
Even as a tiger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the antelopes which speediest are,
In her light boat ; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water, till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

LII

And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits—
In mighty legions, million after million, 460
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags ; and many a proud pavilion
Of the intertexture of the atmosphere
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

LIII

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk—cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread 470
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

LIV

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
 Upon those wandering isles of aery dew,
 Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
 She sate, and heard all that had happened new
 Between the earth and moon, since they had brought
 The last intelligence—and now she grew
 Pale as that moon, lost in the watery night—
 And now she wept, and now she laughed outright. 480

LV

These were tame pleasures ; she would often climb
 The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
 Up to some beakèd cape of cloud sublime,
 And like Arion on the dolphin's back
 Ride singing through the shoreless air ;—oft-time
 Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
 She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
 And laughed to hear the fire-balls roar behind.

LVI

And sometimes to those streams of upper air
 Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round, 490
 She would ascend, and win the spirits there
 To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
 That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
 And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
 Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
 And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

LVII

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
 To glide adown old Nilus, where he threads
 Egypt and Aethiopia, from the steep
 Of utmost Axumè, until he spreads, 500
 Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
 His waters on the plain : and crested heads
 Of cities and proud temples gleam amid,
 And many a vapour-belted pyramid.

LVIII

By Moeris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal chamber floors,
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms—within the brazen doors 510
Of the great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,
Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast.

LIX

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased—but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,
Through lotus-paven canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs, and towers, and fanes. 'twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night. 520

LX

With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet.
Through fane, and palace-court, and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile, through chambers high and deep
She passed, observing mortals in their sleep.

LXI

A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep. 530
Here lay two sister twins in infancy ;
There, a lone youth who in his dreams did weep ;
Within, two lovers linkèd innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem ;—and there lay calm
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

LXII

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song—
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong; 540
And all the code of Custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young:
'This,' said the wizard maiden, 'is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life.'

LXIII

And little did the sight disturb her soul.—
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal:—
But she in the calm depths her way could take, 550
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

LXIV

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep—all of one sort—
For all were educated to be so.—
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves. 560

LXV

And all the forms in which those spirits lay
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils, in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs, who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment: they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

LXVI

She, all those human figures breathing there,
 Beheld as living spirits—to her eyes
 The naked beauty of the soul lay bare, 570
 And often through a rude and worn disguise
 She saw the inner form most bright and fair—
 And then she had a charm of strange device,
 Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
 Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

LXVII

Alas ! Aurora, what wouldst thou have given
 For such a charm when Tithon became gray ?
 Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
 Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina 580
 Had half (oh ! why not all ?) the debt forgiven
 Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay,
 To any witch who would have taught you it ?
 The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

LXVIII

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
 Knew what love was, and felt itself alone—
 But holy Dian could not chaster be
 Before she stooped to kiss Endymion,
 Than now this lady—like a sexless bee
 Tasting all blossoms, and confined to none, 590
 Among those mortal forms, the wizard-maiden
 Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

LXIX

To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
 Strange panacea in a crystal bowl :—
 They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
 And lived thenceforward as if some control,
 Mightier than life, were in them ; and the grave
 Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
 Was as a green and overarching bower
 Lit by the gems of many a starry flower. 600

LXX

For on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers' ruining, and shook
The light out of the funeral lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathly nook ;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.

LXXI

And there the body lay, age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying, 610
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life ; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new, the rapid, blind
And fleeting generations of mankind.

LXXII

And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake 620
Which the sand covers—all his evil gain
The miser in such dreams would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap ;—the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

LXXIII

The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the God Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more ; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple doors, and pull
The old cant down ; they licensed all to speak 630
Whate'er they thought of hawks, and cats, and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

LXXIV

The king would dress an ape up in his crown
 And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
 And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
 Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
 The chatterings of the monkey.—Every one
 Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
 Of their great Emperor, when the morning came,
 And kissed—alas, how many kiss the same ! 640

LXXV

The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
 Walked out of quarters in somnambulism ;
 Round the red anvils you might see them stand
 Like Cyclopes in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
 Beating their swords to ploughshares ;—in a band
 The gaolers sent those of the liberal schism
 Free through the streets of Memphis, much, I wis,
 To the annoyance of king Amasis.

LXXVI

And timid lovers who had been so coy,
 They hardly knew whether they loved or not, 650
 Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
 To the fulfilment of their inmost thought ;
 And when next day the maiden and the boy
 Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
 Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
 Only in fancy—till the tenth moon shone ;

LXXVII

And then the Witch would let them take no ill :
 Of many thousand schemes which lovers find,
 The Witch found one,—and so they took their fill
 Of happiness in marriage warm and kind. 660
 Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
 Were torn apart—a wide wound, mind from mind !—
 She did unite again with visions clear
 Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

LXXVIII

These were the pranks she played among the cities

Of mortal men, and what she did to Sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties

To do her will, and show their subtle sleights,
I will declare another time ; for it is

A tale more fit for the weird winter nights
Than for these garish summer days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

670

EPIPSYCHIDION

VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE AND
UNFORTUNATE LADY, EMILIA V——,
NOW IMPRISONED IN THE CONVENT OF —

L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nell'infinito un Mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro.

HER OWN WORDS.

ADVERTISEMENT

THE Writer of the following lines died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades, which he had bought, and where he had fitted up the ruins of an old building, and where it was his hope to have realised a scheme of life, suited perhaps to that happier and better world of which he is now an inhabitant, but hardly practicable in this. His life was singular; less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it, than the ideal tinge which it received from his own character and feelings. The present Poem, like the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats. Not but that *gran vergogna sarebbe a colui, che rimasse cosa sotto veste di figura, o di colore rettorico: e domandato non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotai veste, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento.*

The present poem appears to have been intended by the Writer as the dedication to some longer one. The stanza on the opposite page is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous Canzone

Voi, ch' intendendo, il terzo ciel movete, etc.

The presumptuous application of the concluding lines to his own composition will raise a smile at the expense of my unfortunate friend : be it a smile not of contempt, but pity. S.

My Song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
 Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning,
 Of such hard matter dost thou entertain ;
 Whence, if by misadventure, chance should bring
 Thee to base company (as chance may do),
 Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
 I prithee, comfort thy sweet self again,
 My last delight ! tell them that they are dull,
 And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

EPIPSYCHIDION

SWEET Spirit ! Sister of that orphan one,
 Whose empire is the name thou weepest on,
 In my heart's temple I suspend to thee
 These votive wreaths of withered memory.

Poor captive bird ! who, from thy narrow cage,
 Pourest such music, that it might assuage
 The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,
 Were they not deaf to all sweet melody ;
 This song shall be thy rose : its petals pale
 Are dead, indeed, my adored Nightingale ! 10
 But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,
 And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High, spirit-wingèd Heart ! who dost for ever
 Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,
 Till those bright plumes of thought, in which arrayed
 It over-soared this low and worldly shade,
 Lie shattered ; and thy panting, wounded breast
 Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest !
 I weep vain tears : blood would less bitter be,
 Yet poured forth gladlier, could it profit thee. 20

Seraph of Heaven ! too gentle to be human,
 Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
 All that is insupportable in thee
 Of light, and love, and immortality !
 Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse !
 Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe !
 Thou Moon beyond the clouds ! Thou living Form
 Among the Dead ! Thou Star above the Storm !
 Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror !
 Thou Harmony of Nature's art ! Thou Mirror 30
 In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,
 All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on !
 Ay, even the dim words which obscure thee now
 Flash, lightning-like, with unaccustomed glow ;
 I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song
 All of its much mortality and wrong,
 With those clear drops, which start like sacred dew
 From the twin lights thy sweet soul darkens through,
 Weeping, till sorrow becomes ecstasy :
 Then smile on it, so that it may not die. 40

I never thought before my death to see
 Youth's vision thus made perfect. Emily,
 I love thee ; though the world by no thin name
 Will hide that love from its unvalued shame.
 Would we two had been twins of the same mother !
 Or, that the name my heart lent to another
 Could be a sister's bond for her and thee,
 Blending two beams of one eternity !
 Yet were one lawful and the other true,
 These names, though dear, could paint not, as is due,
 How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me ! 51
 I am not thine : I am a part of *thee*.

Sweet Lamp ! my moth-like Muse has burned its
 wings
 Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
 Young Love should teach Time, in his own gray style,
 All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile,
 A lovely soul formed to be blessed and bless ?

A well of sealed and secret happiness,
 Whose waters like blithe light and music are,
 Vanquishing dissonance and gloom ? A Star 60
 Which moves not in the moving heavens, alone ?
 A Smile amid dark frowns ? a gentle tone
 Amid rude voices ? a beloved light ?
 A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight ?
 A Lute, which those whom Love has taught to play
 Make music on, to soothe the roughest day
 And lull fond Grief asleep ? a buried treasure ?
 A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure ?
 A violet-shrouded grave of Woe ?—I measure
 The world of fancies, seeking one like thee, 70
 And find—alas ! mine own infirmity.

She met me, Stranger, upon life's rough way,
 And lured me towards sweet Death ; as Night by Day,
 Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
 Led into light, life, peace. An antelope,
 In the suspended impulse of its lightness,
 Were less aethereally light : the brightness
 Of her divinest presence trembles through
 Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
 Embodied in the windless heaven of June 80
 Amid the splendour-wingèd stars, the Moon
 Burns, inextinguishably beautiful :
 And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
 Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
 Killing the sense with passion ; sweet as stops
 Of planetary music heard in trance.
 In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
 The sunbeams of those wells which ever leap
 Under the lightnings of the soul—too deep
 For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense. 90
 The glory of her being, issuing thence,
 Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
 Of unentangled intermixture, made
 By Love, of light and motion : one intense
 Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence,
 Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing,

Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
 With the unintermitted blood, which there
 Quivers, (as in a fleece of snow-like air
 The crimson pulse of living morning quiver,) 100
 Continuously prolonged, and ending never,
 Till they are lost, and in that Beauty furled
 Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world ;
 Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
 Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress
 And her loose hair ; and where some heavy tress
 The air of her own speed has disentwined,
 The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind ;
 And in the soul a wild odour is felt,
 Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt 110
 Into the bosom of a frozen bud.—
 See where she stands ! a mortal shape indued
 With love and life and light and deity,
 And motion which may change but cannot die ;
 An image of some bright Eternity ;
 A shadow of some golden dream ; a Splendour
 Leaving the third sphere pilotless ; a tender
 Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
 Under whose motions life's dull billows move ;
 A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning ; 120
 A Vision like incarnate April, warning,
 With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy
 Into his summer grave.

Ah, woe is me !

What have I dared ? where am I lifted ? how
 Shall I descend, and perish not ? I know
 That Love makes all things equal : I have heard
 By mine own heart this joyous truth averred :
 The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
 In love and worship, blends itself with God.

Spouse ! Sister ! Angel ! Pilot of the Fate 130
 Whose course has been so starless ! O too late
 Belovèd ! O too soon adored, by me !
 For in the fields of Immortality
 My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,

A divine presence in a place divine ;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth ;
But not as now :—I love thee ; yes, I feel
That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright 140
For thee, since in those *tears* thou hast delight.
We—are we not formed, as notes of music are,
For one another, though dissimilar ;
Such difference without discord, as can make
Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits shake
As trembling leaves in a continuous air ?

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wrecked.
I never was attached to that great sect,
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select 150
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world, and so
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True Love in this differs from gold and clay, 160
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths ; 'tis like thy light,
Imagination ! which from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human fantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The Universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow
Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates, 170
The life that wears, the spirit that creates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity.

Mind from its object differs most in this :
 Evil from good ; misery from happiness ;
 The baser from the nobler ; the impure
 And frail, from what is clear and must endure.
 If you divide suffering and dross, you may
 Diminish till it is consumed away ;
 If you divide pleasure and love and thought, 180
 Each part exceeds the whole ; and we know not
 How much, while any yet remains unshared,
 Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared :
 This truth is that deep well, whence sages draw
 The unenvied light of hope ; the eternal law
 By which those live, to whom this world of life
 Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife
 Tills for the promise of a later birth
 The wilderness of this Elysian earth.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft 190
 Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
 In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
 Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
 Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
 Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
 Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
 Paved her light steps ;—on an imagined shore,
 Under the gray beak of some promontory
 She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
 That I beheld her not. In solitudes 200
 Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
 And from the fountains, and the odours deep
 Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
 Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
 Breathed but of *her* to the enamoured air ;
 And from the breezes whether low or loud,
 And from the rain of every passing cloud,
 And from the singing of the summer-birds,
 And from all sounds, all silence. In the words 210
 Of antique verse and high romance,—in form,
 Sound, colour—in whatever checks that Storm
 Which with the shattered present chokes the past ;

And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom ;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.—

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
And towards the lodestar of my one desire,
I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight 220
Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.—
But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
Passed, like a God throned on a winged planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the dicary cone of our life's shade ;
And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between 230
Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen :
When a voice said :—' O thou of hearts the weakest,
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest.'
Then I—' Where ? '—the world's echo answered
' where ? '

And in that silence, and in my despair,
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul ;
And murmured names and spells which have control
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate ; 240
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her ; nor uncreate
That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her :
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life ;
And struggling through its error with vain strife, 250

And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
 And half bewildered by new forms, I passed,
 Seeking among those untaught foresters
 If I could find one form resembling hers,
 In which she might have masked herself from me.
 There,—One, whose voice was venom'd melody
 Sate by a well, under blue nightshade bowers ;
 The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
 Her touch was as electric poison,—flame
 Out of her looks into my vitals came, 260
 And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
 A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
 Into the core of my green heart, and lay
 Upon its leaves ; until, as hair grown gray
 O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
 With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
 The shadow of that idol of my thought.
 And some were fair—but beauty dies away :
 Others were wise—but honeyed words betray : 270
 And One was true—oh ! why not true to me ?
 Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
 I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
 Wounded and weak and panting ; the cold day
 Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain.
 When, like a noonday dawn, there shone again
 Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
 As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed
 As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
 Into themselves, to the eternal Sun ; 280
 The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright
 isles,
 Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
 That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
 Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
 And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
 As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
 She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
 From its own darkness, until all was bright

Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind, 290
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face
Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me ;
And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed :
Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead :— 300
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried ' Away, he is not of our crew.'
I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep.

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
Blotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips
Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse ;— 310
And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
And who was then its Tempest ; and when She,
The Planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
The moving billows of my being fell
Into a death of ice, immovable ;—
And then—what earthquakes made it gape and split,
The white Moon smiling all the while on it,
These words conceal :—If not, each word would be
The key of staunchless tears. Weep not for me ! 320

At length, into the obscure Forest came
The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
And from her presence life was radiated
Through the gray earth and branches bare and dead ;

So that her way was paved, and roofed above
 With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love ;
 And music from her respiration spread
 Like light,—all other sounds were penetrated 330
 By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
 So that the savage winds hung mute around ;
 And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
 Dissolving the dull cold in the frore air :
 Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
 When light is changed to love, this glorious One
 Floated into the cavern where I lay,
 And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
 Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
 As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow 340
 I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
 Was penetrating me with living light :
 I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
 So many years—that it was Emily.

Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
 This world of love, this *me* ; and into birth
 Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
 Magnetic might into its central heart ;
 And lift its billows and its mists, and guide
 By everlasting laws, each wind and tide 350
 To its fit cloud, and its appointed cave ;
 And lull its storms, each in the craggy grave
 Which was its cradle, luring to faint bowers
 The armies of the rainbow-winged showers ;
 And, as those married lights, which from the towers
 Of Heaven look forth and fold the wandering globe
 In liquid sleep and splendour, as a robe ;
 And all their many-mingled influence blend,
 If equal, yet unlike, to one sweet end ;—
 So ye, bright regents, with alternate sway 360
 Govern my sphere of being, night and day !
 Thou, not disdaining even a borrowed might ;
 Thou, not eclipsing a remoter light ;
 And, through the shadow of the seasons three,
 From Spring to Autumn's sere maturity,

Light it into the Winter of the tomb,
 Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom.
 Thou too, O Comet beautiful and fierce,
 Who drew the heart of this frail Universe
 Towards thine own ; till, wrecked in that convulsion,
 Alternating attraction and repulsion, 371
 Thine went astray and that was rent in twain ;
 Oh, float into our azure heaven again !
 Be there Love's folding-star at thy return ;
 The living Sun will feed thee from its urn
 Of golden fire ; the Moon will veil her horn
 In thy last smiles ; adoring Even and Morn
 Will worship thee with incense of calm breath
 And lights and shadows ; as the star of Death
 And Birth is worshipped by those sisters wild 380
 Called Hope and Fear—upon the heart are piled
 Their offerings,—of this sacrifice divine
 A World shall be the altar.

Lady mine,
 Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth
 Which from its heart of hearts that plant puts forth
 Whose fruit, made perfect by thy sunny eyes,
 Will be as of the trees of Paradise.

The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me.
 To whatsoever of dull mortality
 Is mine, remain a vestal sister still ; 390
 To the intense, the deep, the imperishable,
 Not mine but me, henceforth be thou united
 Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
 The hour is come :—the destined Star has risen
 Which shall descend upon a vacant prison.
 The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
 The sentinels—but true Love never yet
 Was thus constrained : it overleaps all fence :
 Like lightning, with invisible violence
 Piercing its continents ; like Heaven's free breath,
 Which he who grasps can hold not ; liker Death, 401
 Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
 Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array

Of arms : more strength has Love than he or they ;
For it can burst his charnel, and make free
The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
The soul in dust and chaos.

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow ;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor, 410
No keel has ever ploughed that path before ;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles ;
The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles ;
The merry mariners are bold and free :
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me ?
Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple East ;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night,
And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless Sea, 420
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited ; innocent and bold.
The blue Aegean girds this chosen home, 430
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar ;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide :
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide ;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air ; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls 441
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls

Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales ;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs ;
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep ;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep, 450
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison :
Which is a soul within the soul—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.—
It is an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea,
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity ;
Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue Oceans of young air. 460
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks ; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way :
The wingèd storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky 470
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess :
Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt, not seen 480
O'er the gray rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.—

In words, to live again in looks, which dart
 With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
 Harmonizing silence without a sound.
 Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
 And our veins beat together ; and our lips
 With other eloquence than words, eclipse
 The soul that burns between them, and the wells
 Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
 The fountains of our deepest life, shall be 570
 Confused in Passion's golden purity,
 As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
 We shall become the same, we shall be one
 Spirit within two frames, oh ! wherefore two ?
 One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
 Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
 Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
 Touch, mingle, are transfigured ; ever still
 Burning, yet ever unconsumable :
 In one another's substance finding food, 580
 Like flames too pure and light and unimbu'd
 To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
 Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away :
 One hope within two wills, one will beneath
 Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death
 One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
 And one annihilation. Woe is me !
 The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce
 Into the height of Love's rare Universe,
 Are chains of lead around its flight of fire— 590
 I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire !

Weak Verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
 And say :—' We are the masters of thy slave ;
 What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine ? '
 Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,
 All singing loud : ' Love's very pain is sweet,
 But its reward is in the world divine
 Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave.'

So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
Over the hearts of men, until ye meet 600
Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,
And bid them love each other and be blessed :
And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
And come and be my guest,—for I am Love's.

ADONAIS

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS,
AUTHOR OF ENDYMION, HYPERION, ETC.

‘Αστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσιν Ἐῷος
γὺν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις Ἐσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.—PLATO.

PREFACE

Φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίων, ποτὶ σὺν στόμα, φάρμακον εἶδες.
πῶς τευ τοῖς χρίλεσσι ποτέδραμε, κοῦκ ἐγλυκάνθη;
πῶς δὲ βροτὸς τοσσοῦτον ἀνάμερος, ἢ κερασαι τοι,
ἢ δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον; ἐκφυγεν ῥῶδάν.

—MOSCHUS, EPITAPH. BION.

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled prove at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the — of — 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory

I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful, and where cankerworms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind, the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs, a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows or one like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to *Endymion*, was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated, with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, *Paris*, and *Woman*, and a *Syrian Tale*, and Mrs Lefanu, and Mr Barrett, and Mr Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men who in their venal good nature presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev Mr Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exacerbated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits, the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by

Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, 'almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend.' Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name!

ADONIS

I

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead !
O, weep for Adonais ! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head !
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say : ‘ With me
Died Adonais ; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity ! ’

II

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay, 10
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

III

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead !
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep ! 20
Yet wherefore ? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend ;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air ;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our
despair.

IV

Most musical of mourners, weep again !
Lament anew, Urania !—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain, 30
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood ; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death ; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth ; the third among the sons of light,

V

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
Not all to that bright station dared to climb ;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time 40
In which suns perished ; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime ;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene
abode.

VI

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished—
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew ;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew ! 50

Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last.
 The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
 Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste ;
 The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
 Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
 He came ; and bought, with price of purest breath,
 A grave among the eternal.—Come away !
 Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
 Is yet his fitting charnel-roof ! while still 60
 He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay ;
 Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill
 Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII

He will awake no more, oh, never more !—
 Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
 The shadow of white Death, and at the door
 Invisible Corruption waits to trace
 His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;
 The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
 Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface 70
 So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
 Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

IX

Oh, weep for Adonais !—The quick Dreams,
 The passion-wingèd Ministers of thought,
 Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
 Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
 The love which was its music, wander not,—
 Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
 But droop there, whence they sprung ; and mourn
 their lot 79
 Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
 They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
 And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries ;
 ' Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead ;
 See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
 Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
 A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain.'
 Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise !
 She knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain
 She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain. 90

XI

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
 Washed his light limbs as if embalming them ;
 Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
 The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
 Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem ;
 Another in her wilful grief would break
 Her bow and wingèd reeds, as if to stem
 A greater loss with one which was more weak ;
 And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

XII

Another Splendour on his mouth alit, 100
 That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
 Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
 And pass into the panting heart beneath
 With lightning and with music : the damp death
 Quenched its caress upon his icy lips ;
 And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
 Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
 It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its
 eclipse.

XIII

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
 Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies, 110
 Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarna-
 tions
 Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies ;
 And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,

And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
 Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
 Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem
 Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
 From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
 Lamented Adonais. Morning sought 120
 Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
 Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
 Dimmed the aëreal eyes that kindle day ;
 Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
 Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
 And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
 And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
 And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
 Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
 Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day ; 131
 Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
 Than those for whose disdain she pined away
 Into a shadow of all sounds :—a drear
 Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw
 down
 Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
 Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown,
 For whom should she have waked the sullen year ?
 To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear 140
 Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
 Thou, Adonais : wan they stand and sere
 Amid the faint companions of their youth,
 With dew all turned to tears ; odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
 Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;
 Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
 Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
 Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
 Soaring and screaming round her empty nest, 150
 As Albion waits for thee : the curse of Cain
 Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
 And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest !

XVIII

Ah, woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,
 But grief returns with the revolving year ;
 The airs and streams renew their joyous tone ;
 The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear ;
 Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier ;
 The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
 And build their mossy homes in field and brake ; 160
 And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
 Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX

Through wood and stream and field and hill and
 Ocean
 A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
 As it has ever done, with change and motion,
 From the great morning of the world when first
 God dawned on Chaos ; in its stream immersed,
 The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light ;
 All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst ;
 Diffuse themselves ; and spend in love's delight,
 The beauty and the joy of their renewed might. 171

XX

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
 Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;
 Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
 Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
 And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath ;

Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which
 knows
 Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
 By sightless lightning ?—the intense atom glows
 A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

XXI

Alas ! that all we loved of him should be, 181
 But for our grief, as if it had not been,
 And grief itself be mortal ! Woe is me !
 Whence are we, and why are we ? of what scene
 The actors or spectators ? Great and mean
 Meet massed in death, who lends what life must
 borrow.
 As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
 Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
 Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to
 sorrow.

XXII

He will awake no more, oh, never more ! 190
 'Wake thou,' cried Misery, 'childless Mother, rise
 Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
 A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs.'
 And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
 And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
 Had held in holy silence, cried : 'Arise !'
 Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
 From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
 Out of the East, and follows wild and drear 200
 The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
 Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
 Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
 So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania ;
 So saddened round her like an atmosphere
 Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way
 Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread 210
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than
they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and Life's pale light 220
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
' Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
Leave me not ! ' cried Urania : her distress
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her
vain caress.

XXVI

' Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again ;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live ;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive, 230
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais ! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art !
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart !

XXVII

' O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then

Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear ?
 Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when 241
 Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
 The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

XXVIII

'The herded wolves, bold only to pursue ;
 The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead ;
 The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
 Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
 And whose wings rain contagion ;—how they fled,
 When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
 The Pythian of the age one arrow sped 250
 And smiled !—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
 They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

XXIX

'The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn ;
 He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
 Is gathered into death without a dawn,
 And the immortal stars awake again ;
 So is it in the world of living men :
 A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
 Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
 It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
 Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night.' 261

XXX

Thus ceased she : and the mountain shepherds came,
 Their garlands sore, their magic mantles rent :
 The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
 Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
 An early but enduring monument,
 Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
 In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent
 The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
 And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his
 tongue. 270

XXXI

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
 A phantom among men ; companionless
 As the last cloud of an expiring storm
 Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,
 Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
 Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
 With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
 And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
 Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

XXXII

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift— 280
 A Love in desolation masked ;—a Power
 Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift
 The weight of the superincumbent hour ;
 It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
 A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
 Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
 The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek
 The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may
 break.

XXXIII

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
 And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue ; 290
 And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
 Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
 Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
 Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
 Shook the weak hand that grasped it ; of that crew
 He came the last, neglected and apart ;
 A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
 Smiled through their tears ; well knew that gentle
 band
 Who in another's fate now wept his own, 300
 As in the accents of an unknown land
 He sung new sorrow ; sad Urania scanned

The Stranger's mien, and murmured: 'Who art thou?'

He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh! that it should
be so!

XXXV

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone, 310
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone 320
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow: 330
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XXXVIII

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
 Far from these carrion kites that scream below ;
 He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead ;
 Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
 Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall flow
 Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow 340
 Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
 Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of
 shame.

XXXIX

Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
 He hath awakened from the dream of life—
 'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
 With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
 And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
 Invulnerable nothings.—We decay
 Like corpses in a charnel ; fear and grief
 Convulse us and consume us day by day, 350
 And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

XL

He has outsoared the shadow of our night ;
 Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,
 Can touch him not and torture not again ;
 From the contagion of the world's slow stain
 He is secure, and now can never mourn
 A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain ;
 Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
 With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn. 360

XLI

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he ;
 Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
 Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone ;
 Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan !

Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair !

XLI

He is made one with Nature : there is heard 370
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird ;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLII

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress 381
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling
 there,
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not ;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb, 390
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
 Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
 Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
 Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not 400
 Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought
 And as he fell and as he lived and loved
 Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
 Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved :
 Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

XLVI

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
 But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
 So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
 Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
 'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry, 410
 'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
 Swung blind in unascended majesty,
 Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
 Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper of our throng !'

XLVII

Who mourns for Adonais ? Oh, come forth,
 Fond wretch ! and know thyself and him aright.
 Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth ;
 As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
 Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
 Sate the void circumference : then shrink 420
 Even to a point within our day and night ;
 And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
 When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the
 brink.

XLVIII

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
 Oh, not of him, but of our joy : 'tis nought
 That ages, empires, and religions there
 Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought ;
 For such as he can lend,—they borrow not

Glory from those who made the world their prey ;
 And he is gathered to the kings of thought 430
 Who waged contention with their time's decay,
 And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
 The grave, the city, and the wilderness ;
 And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
 And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
 The bones of Desolation's nakedness
 Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
 Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
 Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead 440
 A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread ;

L

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
 Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;
 And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
 Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
 This refuge for his memory, doth stand
 Like flame transformed to marble ; and beneath,
 A field is spread, on which a newer band
 Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of
 death, 449
 Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

LI

Here pause : these graves are all too young as yet
 To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
 Its charge to each ; and if the seal is set,
 Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
 Break it not thou ! too surely shalt thou find
 Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
 Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
 Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
 What Adonais is, why fear we to become ?

LII

The One remains, the many change and pass ; 460
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
 If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek !
 Follow where all is fled !—Rome's azure sky,
 Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
 The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart ?
 Thy hopes are gone before : from all things here 470
 They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !
 A light is passed from the revolving year,
 And man, and woman ; and what still is dear
 Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
 The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near :
 'Tis Adonais calls ! oh, hasten thither,
 No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
 That Beauty in which all things work and move,
 That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse 480
 Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
 Which through the web of being blindly wove
 By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
 Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
 The fire for which all thirst ; now beams on me,
 Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
 Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven,
 Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
 Whose sails were never to the tempest given ; 490
 The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven !
 I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar ;
 Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

FROM 'HELLAS'

Chorus of Greek Captive Women.

WE strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow,—
They were stripped from Orient bowers,
By the Indian billow.
Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,
Like theirs who fell—not ours who weep !

Indian.

Away, unlovely dreams !
Away, false shapes of sleep !
Be his, as Heaven seems, 10
Clear, and bright, and deep !
Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath.

Chorus.

Sleep, sleep ! our song is laden
With the soul of slumber ;
It was sung by a Samian maiden,
Whose lover was of the number
Who now keep
That calm sleep
Whence none may wake, where none shall weep. 20

Indian.

I touch thy temples pale !
I breathe my soul on thee !
And could my prayers avail,
All my joy should be
Dead, and I would live to weep,
So thou mightst win one hour of quiet sleep.

Chorus.

Breathe low, low
The spell of the mighty mistress now !
When Conscience lulls her sated snake,
And Tyrants sleep, let Freedom wake. 30
Breathe low—low
The words which, like secret fire, shall flow
Through the veins of the frozen earth—low, low !

Semichorus I.

Life may change, but it may fly not ;
Hope may vanish, but can die not ;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth ;
Love repulsed,—but it returneth !

Semichorus II.

Yet were life a charnel where
Hope lay confined with Despair ;
Yet were truth a sacred lie, 40
Love were lust—

Semichorus I.

If Liberty
Lent not life its soul of light,
Hope its iris of delight,
Truth its prophet's robe to wear,
Love its power to give and bear.

Chorus.

In the great morning of the world,
The Spirit of God with might unfurled
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,
And all its banded anarchs fled,
Like vultures frightened from Imaus, 50
Before an earthquake's tread.—
So from Time's tempestuous dawn
Freedom's splendour burst and shone :—
Thermopylae and Marathon

Caught, like mountains beacon-lighted,
 The springing Fire.—The wingèd glory
 On Philippi half-alighted,
 Like an eagle on a promontory.
 Its unwearied wings could fan
 The quenchless ashes of Milan.
 From age to age, from man to man,
 It lived ; and lit from land to land
 Florence, Albion, Switzerland.

60

Then night fell ; and, as from night,
 Reassuming fiery flight,
 From the West swift Freedom came,
 Against the course of Heaven and doom,
 A second sun arrayed in flame,
 To burn, to kindle, to illume.
 From far Atlantis its young beams
 Chased the shadows and the dreams.
 France, with all her sanguine streams,
 Hid, but quenched it not ; again
 Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
 From utmost Germany to Spain.

70

As an eagle fed with morning
 Scorns the embattled tempest's warning,
 When she seeks her aerie hanging
 In the mountain-cedar's hair,
 And her brood expect the clanging
 Of her wings through the wild air,
 Sick with famine :—Freedom, so
 To what of Greece remaineth now
 Returns ; her hoary ruins glow
 Like Orient mountains lost in day ;
 Beneath the safety of her wings
 Her renovated nurslings prey,
 And in the naked lightnings
 Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
 Let Freedom leave—where'er she flies,
 A Desert, or a Paradise :
 Let the beautiful and the brave
 Share her glory, or a grave.

80

90

Semichorus I.

With the gifts of gladness
Greece did thy cradle strew ;

Semichorus II.

With the tears of sadness
Greece did thy shroud bedew !

Semichorus I.

With an orphan's affection
She followed thy bier through Time ;

Semichorus II.

And at thy resurrection
Reappeareth, like thou, sublime !

100

Semichorus I.

If Heaven should resume thee,
To Heaven shall her spirit ascend ;

Semichorus II.

If Hell should entomb thee,
To Hell shall her high hearts bend.

Semichorus I.

If Annihilation——

Semichorus II.

Dust let her glories be !
And a name and a nation
Be forgotten, Freedom, with thee !

Indian.

His brow grows darker—breathe not—move not ! 110
He starts—he shudders—ye that love not,
With your panting loud and fast,
Have awakened him at last.

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
But they are still immortal
Who, through birth's orient portal
And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
Clothe their unceasing flight
In the brief dust and light
Gathered around their chariots as they go ; 10
New shapes they still may weave,
New gods, new laws receive,
Bright or dim are they as the robes they last
On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,
A Promethean conqueror, came ;
Like a triumphal path he trod
The thorns of death and shame.
A mortal shape to him
Was like the vapour dim 20
Which the orient planet animates with light ;
Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
Nor preyed, until their Lord had taken flight ;
The moon of Mahomet
Arose, and it shall set :
While blazoned as on Heaven's immortal noon
The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
From one whose dreams are Paradise 30
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
And Day peers forth with her blank eyes ;
So fleet, so faint, so fair,
The Powers of earth and air
Fled from the folding-star of Bethlehem :
Apollo, Pan, and Love,
And even Olympian Jove
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them ;

Our hills and seas and streams,
Dispeopled of their dreams, 40
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.

Semichorus I.

Would I were the wingèd cloud
Of a tempest swift and loud !
I would scorn
The smile of morn
And the wave where the moonrise is born !
I would leave
The spirits of eve
A shroud for the corpse of the day to weave
From other threads than mine !
Bask in the deep blue noon divine. 10
Who would ? Not I.

Semichorus II.

Whither to fly ?

Semichorus I.

Where the rocks that gird th' Aegean
Echo to the battle paean
Of the free—
I would flee
A tempestuous herald of victory !
My golden rain
For the Grecian slain
Should mingle in tears with the bloody main, 20
And my solemn thunder-knell
Should ring to the world the passing-bell
Of Tyranny !

Semichorus II.

Ah king ! wilt thou chain
The rack and the rain ?
Wilt thou fetter the lightning and hurricane ?
The storms are free,
But we—

Chorus.

O Slavery ! thou frost of the world's prime,
 Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare ! 30
 Thy touch has stamped these limbs with crime,
 These brows thy branding garland bear,
 But the free heart, the impassive soul
 Scorn thy control !

Semichorus I.

Let there be light ! said Liberty,
 And like sunrise from the sea,
 Athens arose !—Around her born,
 Shone like mountains in the morn
 Glorious states ;—and are they now
 Ashes, wrecks, oblivion ?

Semichorus II.

Go, 40
 Where Thermae and Asopus swallowed
 Persia, as the sand does foam ;
 Deluge upon deluge followed,
 Discord, Macedon, and Rome :
 And lastly thou !

Semichorus I.

Temples and towers,
 Citadels and marts, and they
 Who live and die there, have been ours,
 And may be thine, and must decay ;
 But Greece and her foundations are
 Built below the tide of war, 50
 Based on the crystalline sea
 Of thought and its eternity ;
 Her citizens, imperial spirits,
 Rule the present from the past,
 On all this world of men inherits
 Their seal is set.

Semichorus II.

Hear ye the blast,
 Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls

From ruin her Titanian walls ?
 Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
 Of Slavery ? Argos, Corinth, Crete
 Hear, and from their mountain thrones
 The daemons and the nymphs repeat
 The harmony.

60

Semichorus I.

I hear ! I hear !

Semichorus II.

The world's eyeless charioteer,
 Destiny, is hurrying by !
 What faith is crushed, what empire bleeds
 Beneath her earthquake-footed steeds ?
 What eagle-wingèd victory sits
 At her right hand ? what shadow flits
 Before ? what splendour rolls behind ?
 Ruin and renovation cry
 ' Who but We ? '

70

Semichorus I.

I hear ! I hear !

The hiss as of a rushing wind,
 The roar as of an ocean foaming,
 The thunder as of earthquake coming.

I hear ! I hear !

The crash as of an empire falling,
 The shrieks as of a people calling
 ' Mercy ! mercy ! '—How they thrill !
 Then a shout of ' kill ! kill ! kill ! '
 And then a small still voice, thus—

80

Semichorus II.

For

Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind,
 The foul cubs like their parents are,
 Their den is in the guilty mind,
 And Conscience feeds them with despair.

Semichorus I.

In sacred Athens, near the fane
 Of Wisdom, Pity's altar stood :
 Serve not the unknown God in vain,
 But pay that broken shrine again,
 Love for hate and tears for blood.

90

The world's great age begins anew,
 The golden years return,
 The earth doth like a snake renew
 Her winter weeds outworn :
 Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
 Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
 From waves serener far ;
 A new Peneus rolls his fountains
 Against the morning star.
 Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
 Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

11

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
 Fraught with a later prize ;
 Another Orpheus sings again,
 And loves, and weeps, and dies.
 A new Ulysses leaves once more
 Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
 If earth Death's scroll must be !
 Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
 Which dawns upon the free :
 Although a subtler Sphinx renew
 Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

2

Another Athens shall arise,
 And to remoter time
 Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
 The splendour of its prime ;

And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give. 30

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued :
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease ! must hate and death return ?
Cease ! must men kill and die ?
Cease ! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy. 40
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last !

SONG FROM 'CHARLES THE FIRST'

HEIGHO ! the lark and the owl !
One flies the morning, and one lulls the night :---
Only the nightingale, poor fond soul,
Sings like the fool through darkness and light.

' A widow bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough ;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

' There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.'

EARLY POEMS [1814, 1815]

STANZAS.—APRIL, 1814

Away ! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drank the last pale beam of even :
Away ! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of
heaven.

Pause not ! The time is past ! Every voice cries,
Away !

Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle
mood :

Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat
thy stay :

Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away ! to thy sad and silent home ;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth ; 10
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.

The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around
thine head :

The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam beneath thy
feet :

But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that
binds the dead,

Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou
and peace may meet.

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own
repose,

For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in the
deep :

Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows ;
Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its
appointed sleep. 20

Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet till the phantoms flee
Which that house and heath and garden made dear
to thee erewhile,
Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings
are not free
From the music of two voices and the light of one
sweet smile.

MUTABILITY

WE are as clouds that veil the midnight moon ;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly !—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever :
Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.
We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep ;
We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes the day ;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep ;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away :
It is the same !—For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free :
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow ;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

A SUMMER EVENING CHURCHYARD

LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray ;
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day :
Silence and Twilight, unbeloved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
 Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea ;
 Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
 Responding to the charm with its own mystery. 10
 The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
 Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, æreal Pile ! whose pinnacles
 Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
 Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells,
 Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
 Around whose lessening and invisible height
 Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres :
 And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound, 20
 Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
 Breathed from their wormy beds all living things
 around,
 And mingling with the still night and mute sky
 Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
 And terrorless as this serenest night :
 Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
 Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human
 sight
 Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
 That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep. 30

TO —

ΔΑΚΡΥΣΙ ΔΙΟΙΣΩ ΠΟΤΜΟΝ 'ΑΠΟΤΜΟΝ.

OH ! there are spirits of the air,
 And genii of the evening breeze,
 And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
 As star-beams among twilight trees :—
 Such lovely ministers to meet
 Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,

And moonlight seas, that are the voice

Of these inexplicable things,

Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice

10

When they did answer thee ; but they

Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes

Beams that were never meant for thine,

Another's wealth—tame sacrifice

To a fond faith ! still dost thou pine ?

Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,

Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands ?

Ah ! wherefore didst thou build thine hope

On the false earth's inconstancy ?

20

Did thine own mind afford no scope

Of love, or moving thoughts to thee ?

That natural scenes or human smiles

Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles ?

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled

Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted ;

The glory of the moon is dead ;

Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed ;

Thine own soul still is true to thee,

But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

30

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever

Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,

Dream not to chase ;—the mad endeavour

Would scourge thee to severer pangs.

Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,

Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

TO WORDSWORTH

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know

That things depart which never may return :

Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,

Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.

These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar :
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude :
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

FEELINGS OF A REPUBLICAN ON THE FALL OF BONAPARTE

I HATED thee, fallen tyrant ! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy throne
Where it had stood even now : thou didst prefer
A frail and bloody pomp which Time has swept
In fragments towards Oblivion. Massacre,
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have crept.
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than Force or Fraud : old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of Time.

LINES

I

THE cold earth slept below,
Above the cold sky shone ;
And all around, with a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow,
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.

II

The wintry hedge was black,
The green grass was not seen,
The birds did rest on the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.

III

Thine eyes glowed in the glare
Of the moon's dying light ;
As a fen-fire's beam on a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly, so the moon shone there,
And it yellowed the strings of thy raven hair,
That shook in the wind of night.

IV

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved—
The wind made thy bosom chill—
The night did shed on thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1816

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY

I

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us,—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain
shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance ;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,— 10
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

II

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone ?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate ?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown, 20
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope ?

III

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
 To sage or poet these responses given—
 Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
 Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
 Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not **avail** to
 sever,
 From all we hear and all we see, 30
 Doubt, chance, and mutability.
 Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
 Or music by the night-wind sent
 Through strings of some still instrument,
 Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
 Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

IV

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
 And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
 Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
 Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art, 40
 Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart,
 Thou messenger of sympathies,
 That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
 Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
 Like darkness to a dying flame !
 Depart not as thy shadow came,
 Depart not—lest the grave should be,
 Like life and fear, a dark reality.

V

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
 Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin, 50
 And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
 Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
 I called on poisonous names with which our youth is
 fed ;
 I was not heard—I saw them not—
 When musing deeply on the lot

Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
 All vital things that wake to bring
 News of birds and blossoming,—
 Sudden, thy shadow fell on me ;
 I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy ! 60

VI

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
 To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow ?
 With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
 I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
 Each from his voiceless grave : they have in visioned
 bowers
 Of studious zeal or love's delight
 Outwatched with me the envious night—
 They know that never joy illumed my brow
 Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
 This world from its dark slavery, 70
 That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
 Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

VII

The day becomes more solemn and serene
 When noon is past—there is a harmony
 In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
 Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
 As if it could not be, as if it had not been !
 Thus let thy power, which like the truth
 Of nature on my passive youth
 Descended, to my onward life supply 80
 Its calm—to one who worships thee,
 And every form containing thee,
 Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
 To fear himself, and love all human kind.

MONT BLANC

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI

I

THE everlasting universe of things
 Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
 Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
 Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
 The source of human thought its tribute brings
 Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
 Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
 In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
 Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
 Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river 10
 Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
 Thou many-coloured, many-voicèd vale,
 Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
 Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams : awful scene,
 Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
 From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
 Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
 Of lightning through the tempest ;—thou dost lie,
 Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging, 20
 Children of elder time, in whose devotion
 The chainless winds still come and ever came
 To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
 To hear—an old and solemn harmony ;
 Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep
 Of the aethereal waterfall, whose veil
 Robes some unsculptured image ; the strange sleep
 Which when the voices of the desert fail
 Wraps all in its own deep eternity ;—
 Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion, 30
 A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame ;
 Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,

Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
 Dizzy Ravine ! and when I gaze on thee
 I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
 To muse on my own separate fantasy,
 My own, my human mind, which passively
 Now renders and receives fast influencings,
 Holding an unremitting interchange
 With the clear universe of things around : 40
 One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
 Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
 Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
 In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
 Seeking among the shadows that pass by
 Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
 Some phantom, some faint image ; till the breast
 From which they fled recalls them, thou art there !

III

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
 Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber, 50
 And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
 Of those who wake and live.—I look on high ;
 Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
 The veil of life and death ? or do I lie
 In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
 Spread far around and inaccessible
 Its circles ? For the very spirit fails,
 Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
 That vanishes among the viewless gales !
 Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky, 60
 Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
 Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
 Pile around it, ice and rock ; broad vales between
 Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
 Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
 And wind among the accumulated steeps ;
 A desert peopled by the storms alone,
 Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
 And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously
 Its shapes are heaped around ! rude, bare, and high, 70

Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the scene
 Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
 Ruin ? Were these their toys ? or did a sea
 Of fire envelop once this silent snow ?
 None can reply—all seems eternal now.
 The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
 Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
 So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
 But for such faith, with nature reconciled ;
 Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal 80
 Large codes of fraud and woe ; not understood
 By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
 Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
 Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
 Within the daedal earth ; lightning, and rain.
 Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
 The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
 Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
 Holds every future leaf and flower ;—the bound 90
 With which from that detested trance they leap ;
 The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
 And that of him and all that his may be ;
 All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
 Are born and die ; revolve, subside, and swell.
 Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
 Remote, serene, and inaccessible :
 And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
 On which I gaze, even these primaeval mountains
 Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep 100
 Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far
 fountains,
 Slow rolling on ; there, many a precipice,
 Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
 Have piled : dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
 A city of death, distinct with many a tower
 And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
 Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin

Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
 Rolls its perpetual stream ; vast pines are strewing
 Its destined path, or in the mangled soil 110
 Branchless and shattered stand ; the rocks, drawn down
 From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
 The limits of the dead and living world,
 Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
 Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil ;
 Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
 So much of life and joy is lost. The race
 Of man flies far in dread ; his work and dwelling
 Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
 And their place is not known. Below, vast caves 120
 Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
 Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
 Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
 The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
 Rolls its loud waters to the ocean-waves,
 Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

v

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high :—the power is there,
 The still and solemn power of many sights,
 And many sounds, and much of life and death.
 In the calm darkness of the moonless nights, 130
 In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
 Upon that Mountain ; none beholds them there,
 Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
 Or the star-beams dart through them :—Winds contend
 Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
 Rapid and strong, but silently ! Its home
 The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
 Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
 Over the snow. The secret Strength of things
 Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome 140
 Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee !
 And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
 If to the human mind's imaginings
 Silence and solitude were vacancy ?

July 23, 1816.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY

I

THE billows on the beach are leaping around it,
The bark is weak and frail,
The sea looks black, and the clouds that bound it
Darkly strew the gale.
Come with me, thou delightful child,
Come with me, though the wave is wild,
And the winds are loose, we must not stay,
Or the slaves of the law may rend thee away.

II

They have taken thy brother and sister dear,
They have made them unfit for thee ; 10
They have withered the smile and dried the tear
Which should have been sacred to me.
To a blighting faith and a cause of crime
They have bound them slaves in youthly prime,
And they will curse my name and thee
Because we fearless are and free.

III

Come thou, belovèd as thou art ;
Another sleepeth still
Near thy sweet mother's anxious heart,
Which thou with joy shalt fill, 20
With fairest smiles of wonder thrown
On that which is indeed our own,
And which in distant lands will be
The dearest playmate unto thee.

IV

Fear not the tyrants will rule for ever,
 Or the priests of the evil faith ;
 They stand on the brink of that raging river,
 Whose waves they have tainted with death.
 It is fed from the depth of a thousand dells,
 Around them it foams and rages and swells ; 30
 And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
 Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.

V

Rest, rest, and shriek not, thou gentle child !
 The rocking of the boat thou fearest,
 And the cold spray and the clamour wild ?—
 There, sit between us two, thou dearest—
 Me and thy mother—well we know
 The storm at which thou tremblest so,
 With all its dark and hungry graves,
 Less cruel than the savage slaves 40
 Who hunt us o'er these sheltering waves.

VI

This hour will in thy memory
 Be a dream of days forgotten long,
 We soon shall dwell by the azure sea
 Of serene and golden Italy,
 Or Grece, the Mother of the free ;
 And I will teach thine infant tongue
 To call upon those heroes old
 In their own language, and will mould
 Thy growing spirit in the flame 50
 Of Grecian lore, that by such name
 A patriot's birthright thou mayst claim !

ON FANNY GODWIN

HER voice did quiver as we parted,
 Yet knew I not that heart was broken
 From which it came, and I departed
 Heeding not the words then spoken.
 Misery—O Misery,
 This world is all too wide for thee.

LINES

I

THAT time is dead for ever, child !
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever !
 We look on the past
 And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghast,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
 To death on life's dark river.

II

The stream we gazed on then rolled by ;
Its waves are unreturning ;
 But we yet stand
 In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
 In the light of life's dim morning.

DEATH

I

THEY die—the dead return not—Misery
 Sits near an open grave and calls them over,
A Youth with hoary hair and haggard eye—
 They are the names of kindred, friend and lover,
Which he so feebly calls—they all are gone—
Fond wretch, all dead ! those vacant names alone,
 This most familiar scene, my pain—
 These tombs—alone remain.

II

Misery, my sweetest friend—oh, weep no more !
 Thou wilt not be consoled—I wonder not !
For I have seen thee from thy dwelling's door
 Watch the calm sunset with them, and this spot
Was even as bright and calm, but transitory,
And now thy hopes are gone, thy hair is hoary ;
 This most familiar scene, my pain—
 These tombs—alone remain.

OZYMANDIAS

I MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed :
And on the pedestal these words appear :
' My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair !'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1818

TO THE NILE

MONTH after month the gathered rains descend
Drenching yon secret Aethiopian dells,
And from the desert's ice-girt pinnacles
Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend
On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.
Girt there with blasts and meteors Tempest dwells
By Nile's aerial urn, with rapid spells
Urging those waters to their mighty end.
O'er Egypt's land of Memory floods are level
And they are thine, O Nile—and well thou knowest
That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil
And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.
Beware, O Man—for knowledge must to thee,
Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be.

PASSAGE OF THE APENNINES

LISTEN, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below
The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and gray,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm.

THE PAST

I

WILT thou forget the happy hours
Which we buried in Love's sweet bowers,
Heaping over their corpses cold
Blossoms and leaves, instead of mould?
Blossoms which were the joys that fell,
And leaves, the hopes that yet remain.

II

Forget the dead, the past? Oh, yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it,
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
That joy, once lost, is pain.

TO MARY —

O MARY dear, that you were here
With your brown eyes bright and clear,
And your sweet voice, like a bird
Singing love to its lone mate

In the ivy bower disconsolate ;
 Voice the sweetest ever heard !
 And your brow more
 Than the sky
 Of this azure Italy.
 Mary dear, come to me soon,
 I am not well whilst thou art far ;
 As sunset to the spherèd moon,
 As twilight to the western star,
 Thou, belovèd, art to me.
 O Mary dear, that you were here ;
 The Castle echo whispers ' Here ! '

ON A FADED VIOLET

I

THE odour from the flower is gone
 Which like thy kisses breathed on me ;
 The colour from the flower is flown
 Which glowed of thee and only thee !

II

A shrivelled, lifeless, vacant form,
 It lies on my abandoned breast,
 And mocks the heart which yet is warm,
 With cold and silent rest.

III

I weep,—my tears revive it not !
 I sigh,—it breathes no more on me ;
 Its mute and uncomplaining lot
 Is such as mine should be.

LINES WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN
HILLS

OCTOBER, 1818.

MANY a green isle needs must be
 In the deep wide sea of Misery,
 Or the mariner, worn and wan,
 Never thus could voyage on—

Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track;
Whilst above the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,
Till the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'er-brimming deep;
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weltering through eternity;
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes, as ever still
Longing with divided will,
But no power to seek or shun,
He is ever drifted on
O'er the unrepousing wave
To the haven of the grave.
What, if there no friends will greet;
What, if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat;
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?
Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no:
Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow,
Are like sapless leaflets now
Frozen upon December's bough.

10

30

40

On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally,
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,
One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones, 5c
Where a few gray rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land :
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews, as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale ;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides :
Those unburied bones around 6c
There is many a mournful sound ;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony :
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted :
'Mid the mountains Euganean 7c
I stood listening to the paean
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic ;
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain, 8c
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes

On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow, down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea 90
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair ;
Underneath Day's azure eyes
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo ! the sun upsprings behind, 100
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline ;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies ; 110
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen ;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier. 120
A less drear ruin than than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow

Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown 130
Like a rock of Ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death 140
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through æreal gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering :
But if Freedom should awake 150
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime ;
If not, perish thou and they !— 160
Clouds which stain truth's rising day

By her sun consumed away—
Earth can spare ye : while like flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.

Perish—let there only be
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea
As the garment of thy sky
Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage wan ;—
That a tempest-cleaving Swan
Of the songs of Albion,

170

Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee ; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung

180

O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
Chastening terror :—what though yet
Poesy's unfailing River,
Which through Albion winds forever
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled ?

What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own ? oh, rather say
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul ?

190

As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs ;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imaged 'mid mortality ;
As the love from Petrarch's urn,

200

Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
A quenchless lamp by which the heart
Sees things unearthly ;—so thou art,
Mighty spirit—so shall be
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-wingèd Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height ;
From the sea a mist has spread, 210
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that gray cloud
Many-domèd Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow 220
With the purple vintage strain,
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will ;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest-home : 230
Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse ; but 'tis a bitter woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.
Padua, thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Played at dice for Ezzelin,

THE EUGANEAN HILLS

367

Till Death cried, " I win, I win ! " 240
 And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
 But Death promised, to assuage her,
 That he would petition for
 Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
 When the destined years were o'er,
 Over all between the Po
 And the eastern Alpine snow,
 Under the mighty Austrian.
 Sin smiled so as Sin only can,
 And since that time, ay, long before, 250
 Both have ruled from shore to shore,—
 That incestuous pair, who follow
 Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
 As Repentance follows Crime,
 And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
 Padua, now no more is burning ;
 Like a meteor, whose wild way
 Is lost over the grave of day,
 It gleams betrayed and to betray : 260
 Once remotest nations came
 To adore that sacred flame,
 When it lit not many a hearth
 On this cold and gloomy earth :
 Now new fires from antique light
 Spring beneath the wide world's might ;
 But their spark lies dead in thee,
 Trampled out by Tyranny.
 As the Norway woodman quells,
 In the depth of piny dells, 270
 One light flame among the brakes,
 While the boundless forest shakes,
 And its mighty trunks are torn
 By the fire thus lowly born :
 The spark beneath his feet is dead,
 He starts to see the flames it fed
 Howling through the darkened sky
 With a myriad tongues victoriously,

And sinks down in fear : so thou,
 O Tyranny, beholdest now 280
 Light around thee, and thou hearest
 The loud flames ascend, and fearest :
 Grovel on the earth ; ay, hide
 In the dust thy purple pride !

Noon descends around me now :
 'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
 When a soft and purple mist
 Like a vaporous amethyst,
 Or an air-dissolvèd star 290
 Mingling light and fragrance, far
 From the curved horizon's bound
 To the point of Heaven's profound,
 Fills the overflowing sky ;
 And the plains that silent lie
 Underneath, the leaves unsodden
 Where the infant Frost has trodden
 With his morning-wingèd feet,
 Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;
 And the red and golden vines, 300
 Piercing with their trellised lines
 The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;
 The dun and bladed grass no less,
 Pointing from this hoary tower
 In the windless air ; the flower
 Glimmering at my feet ; the line
 Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
 In the south dimly islanded ;
 And the Alps, whose snows are spread
 High between the clouds and sun ;
 And of living things each one ; 310
 And my spirit which so long
 Darkened this swift stream of song,—
 Interpenetrated lie
 By the glory of the sky :
 Be it love, light, harmony,
 Odour, or the soul of all
 Which from Heaven like dew doth fall,

THE EUGANEAN HILLS

369

Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

320

Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs :
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like winged winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

330

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of Life and Agony :
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf : even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine :
We may live so happy there,
That the Spirits of the Air,
Envyng us, may even entice
To our healing Paradise

340

350

The polluting multitude ;
 But their rage would be subdued
 By that clime divine and calm,
 And the winds whose wings rain balm
 On the uplifted soul, and leaves 360
 Under which the bright sea heaves ;
 While each breathless interval
 In their whisperings musical
 The inspired soul supplies
 With its own deep melodies,
 And the love which heals all strife
 Circling, like the breath of life,
 All things in that sweet abode
 With its own mild brotherhood :
 They, not it, wou'd change ; and soon 370
 Every sprite beneath the moon
 Would repent its envy vain,
 And the earth grow young again.

SONG FOR 'TASSO

I

I LOVED—alas ! our life is love ;
 But when we cease to breathe and move
 I do suppose love ceases too.
 I thought, but not as now I do,
 Keen thoughts and bright of linkèd lore,
 Of all that men had thought before,
 And all that Nature shows, and more.

II

And still I love and still I think,
 But strangely, for my heart can drink
 The dregs of such despair, and live,
 And love ; . . .
 And if I think, my thoughts come fast,
 I mix the present with the past,
 And each seems uglier than the last.

III

Sometimes I see before me flee
 A silver spirit's form, like thee,
 O Leonora, and I sit
 . . . still watching it,
 Till by the grated casement's ledge
 It fades, with such a sigh, as sedge
 Breathes o'er the breezy streamlet's edge.

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN DEJECTION, NEAR NAPLES

I

THE sun is warm, the sky is clear,
 The waves are dancing fast and bright,
 Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
 The purple noon's transparent might,
 The breath of the moist earth is light,
 Around its unexpanded buds ;
 Like many a voice of one delight,
 The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
 The City's voice itself, is soft like Solitude's.

II

I see the Deep's untrampled floor 10
 With green and purple seaweeds strown ;
 I see the waves upon the shore,
 Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown :
 I sit upon the sands alone,—
 The lightning of the noontide ocean
 Is flashing round me, and a tone
 Arises from its measured motion,
 How sweet ! did any heart now share in my emotion.

III

Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,
 Nor peace within nor calm around, 20
 Nor that content surpassing wealth
 The sage in meditation found,

And walked with inward glory crowned—
 Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
 Others I see whom these surround—
 Smiling they live, and call life pleasure ;—
 To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

IV

Yet now despair itself is mild,
 Even as the winds and waters are ;
 I could lie down like a tired child, 30
 And weep away the life of care
 Which I have borne and yet must bear,
 Till death like sleep might steal on me,
 And I might feel in the warm air
 My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
 Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

V

Some might lament that I were cold,
 As I, when this sweet day is gone,
 Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
 Insults with this untimely moan ; 40
 They might lament— for I am one
 Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
 Unlike this day, which, when the sun
 Shall on its stainless glory set,
 Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

THE WOODMAN AND THE NIGHTINGALE

A WOODMAN whose rough heart was out of tune
 (I think such hearts yet never came to good)
 Hated to hear, under the stars or moon,

One nightingale in an interfluous wood
 Sate the hungry dark with melody ;—
 And as a vale is watered by a flood,

THE WOODMAN AND THE NIGHTINGALE 373

Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness—as a tuberose
Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie

Like clouds above the flower from which they rose, 10
The singing of that happy nightingale
In this sweet forest, from the golden close

Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,
Was interfused upon the silentness ;
The folded roses and the violets pale

Heard her within their slumbers, the abyss
Of heaven with all its planets ; the dull ear
Of the night-cradled earth ; the loneliness

Of the circumfluous waters,—every sphere
And every flower and beam and cloud and wave, 20
And every wind of the mute atmosphere,

And every beast stretched in its rugged cave,
And every bird lulled on its mossy bough,
And every silver moth fresh from the grave

Which is its cradle—ever from below
Aspiring like one who loves too fair, too far,
To be consumed within the purest glow

Of one serene and unapproachèd star,
As if it were a lamp of earthly light,
Unconscious, as some human lovers are, 30

Itself how low, how high beyond all height
The heaven where it would perish !—and every form
That worshipped in the temple of the night

Was awed into delight, and by the charm
Girt as with an interminable zone,
Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm

Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion
Out of their dreams ; harmony became love
In every soul but one.

And so this man returned with axe and saw 40
At evening close from killing the tall tree,
The soul of whom by Nature's gentle law

Was each a wood-nymph, and kept ever green
The pavement and the roof of the wild copse,
Chequering the sunlight of the blue serene

With jagged leaves,—and from the forest tops
Singing the winds to sleep—or weeping oft
Fast showers of aerial water-drops

Into their mother's bosom, sweet and soft,
Nature's pure tears which have no bitterness ;— 50
Around the cradles of the birds aloft

They spread themselves into the loveliness
Of fan-like leaves, and over pallid flowers
Hang like moist clouds :—or, where high branches kiss,

Make a green space among the silent bowers,
Like a vast fane in a metropolis,
Surrounded by the columns and the towers

All overwrought with branch-like traceries
In which there is religion—and the mute
Persuasion of unkindled melodies.

Odours and gleams and murmurs, which the lute
Of the blind pilot-spirit of the blast
Stirs as it sails, now grave and now acute.

Wakening the leaves and waves, ere it has passed
To such brief unison as on the brain
One tone, which never can recur, has cast,
One accent never to return again.

The world is full of Woodmen who expel
Love's gentle Dryads from the haunts of life,
And vex the nightingales in every dell.

SONNET

LIFT not the painted veil which those who live
 Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
 And it but mimic all we would believe
 With colours idly spread,—behind, lurk Fear
 And Hope, twin Destinies; who ever weave
 Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
 I knew one who had lifted it—he sought,
 For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
 But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
 The world contains, the which he could approve.
 Through the unheeding many he did move,
 A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
 Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
 For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819

SONG TO THE MEN OF ENGLAND

I

MEN of England, wherefore plough
 For the lords who lay ye low?
 Wherefore weave with toil and care
 The rich robes your tyrants wear?

II

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
 From the cradle to the grave,
 Those ungrateful drones who would
 Drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood?

III

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
 Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
 That these stingless drones may spoil
 The forced produce of your toil?

IV

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm ?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear ?

V

The seed ye sow, another reaps ;
The wealth ye find, another keeps ;
The robes ye weave, another wears ;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

VI

Sow seed,—but let no tyrant reap ;
Find wealth,—let no impostor heap ;
Weave robes,—let not the idle wear ;
Forge arms,—in your defence to bear.

VII

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells ;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought ? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

VIII

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre.

SONNET: ENGLAND IN 1819

AN old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring,—
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,—
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,—
An army, which liberticide and prey

Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,—
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay ; 10
Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed ;
A Senate,—Time's worst statute unrepealed,—
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

ODE TO HEAVEN

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

First Spirit.

PALACE-ROOF of cloudless nights !
Paradise of golden lights !
Deep, immeasurable, vast,
Which art now, and which wert then
Of the Present and the Past,
Of the eternal Where and When,
Presence-chamber, temple, home,
Ever-canopying dome,
Of acts and ages yet to come !
Glorious shapes have life in thee, 10
Earth, and all earth's company ;
Living globes which ever throng
Thy deep chasms and wildernesses ;
And green worlds that glide along ;
And swift stars with flashing tresses ;
And icy moons most cold and bright,
And mighty suns beyond the night,
Atoms of intensest light.
Even thy name is as a god,
Heaven ! for thou art the abode 20
Of that Power which is the glass
Wherein man his nature sees.
Generations as they pass
Worship thee with bended knees.
Their unremaining gods and they
Like a river roll away :
Thou remainest such—alway !—

Second Spirit.

Thou art but the mind's first chamber,
 Round which its young fancies clamber,
 Like weak insects in a cave, 30
 Lighted up by stalactites ;
 But the portal of the grave,
 Where a world of new delights
 Will make thy best glories seem
 But a dim and noonday gleam
 From the shadow of a dream !

Third Spirit.

Peace ! the abyss is wreathed with scorn
 At your presumption, atom-born !
 What is Heaven ? and what are ye
 Who its brief expanse inherit ? 40
 What are suns and spheres which flee
 With the instinct of that Spirit
 Of which ye are but a part ?
 Drops which Nature's mighty heart
 Drives through thinnest veins ! Depart !
 What is Heaven ? a globe of dew,
 Filling in the morning new
 Some eyed flower whose young leaves waken
 On an unimagined world :
 Constellated suns unshaken, 50
 Orbits measureless, are furled
 In that frail and fading sphere,
 With ten millions gathered there,
 To tremble, gleam, and disappear.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND¹

I

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
 Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
 Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

¹ This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill 10
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill :

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere ;
Destroyer and preserver ; hear, oh, hear !

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning : there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head 20

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst : oh, hear !

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay, 30
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them ! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know 40

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves : oh, hear !

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear ;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee ;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable ! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed 50
Scarce seemed a vision ; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :
 What if my leaves are falling like its own !
 The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone, 60
 Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
 My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
 Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth !
 And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !
 Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O, Wind,
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ? 70

AN EXHORTATION

CHAMELEONS feed on light and air :
 Poets' food is love and fame :
 If in this wide world of care
 Poets could but find the same
 With as little toil as they,
 Would they ever change their hue
 As the light chameleons do,
 Suiting it to every ray
 Twenty times a day ?

Poets are on this cold earth,
 As chameleons might be,
 Hidden from their early birth
 In a cave beneath the sea ;
 Where light is, chameleons change :
 Where love is not, poets do
 Fame is love disguised : if few
 Find either, never think it strange
 That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
A poet's free and heavenly mind :
If bright chameleons should devour
Any food but beams and wind,
They would grow as earthly soon
As their brother lizards are.
Children of a sunnier star,
Spirits from beyond the moon,
Oh, refuse the boon !

THE INDIAN SERENADE

I

I ARISE from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright :
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how ?
To thy chamber window, Sweet !

II

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The Champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart ;—
As I must on thine,
Oh, beloved as thou art !

III

Oh lift me from the grass !
I die ! I faint ! I fail !
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas !
My heart beats loud and fast ;—
Oh ! press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last.

TO SOPHIA [MISS STACEY]

I

THOU art fair, and few are fairer
 Of the Nymphs of earth or ocean ;
 They are robes that fit the wearer—
 Those soft limbs of thine, whose motion
 Ever falls and shifts and glances
 As the life within them dances.

II

Thy deep eyes, a double Planet,
 Gaze the wisest into madness
 With soft clear fire,—the winds that fan it
 Are those thoughts of tender gladness
 Which, like zephyrs on the billow,
 Make thy gentle soul their pillow.

III

If, whatever face thou paintest
 In those eyes, grows pale with pleasure,
 If the fainting soul is faintest
 When it hears thy harp's wild measure,
 Wonder not that when thou speakest
 Of the weak my heart is weakest.

IV

As dew beneath the wind of morning,
 As the sea which whirlwinds waken,
 As the birds at thunder's warning,
 As aught mute yet deeply shaken,
 As one who feels an unseen spirit
 Is my heart when thine is near it.

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY

(With what truth may I say—
 Roma! Roma! Roma!
 Non è più come era prima!)

I

My lost William, thou in whom
 Some bright spirit lived, and did
 That decaying robe consume
 Which its lustre faintly hid,—
 Here its ashes find a tomb,
 But beneath this pyramid
 Thou art not—if a thing divine
 Like thee can die thy funeral shrine
 Is thy mother's grave and mine.

II

Where art thou, my gentle child?
 Let me think thy spirit feeds,
 With its life intense and mild,
 The love of living leaves and weeds
 Among these tombs and ruins wild;—
 Let me think that through low seeds
 Of sweet flowers and sunny grass
 Into their hues and scents may pass
 A portion—

TO MARY SHELLEY

My dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,
 And left me in this dreary world alone?
 Thy form is here indeed—a lovely one—
 But thou art fled, gone down the dreary road,
 That leads to Sorrow's most obscure abode;
 Thou sittest on the hearth of pale despair,
 Where
 For thine own sake I cannot follow thee.

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY

I

THE fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion ;
Nothing in the world is single ;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine ?—

II

See the mountains kiss high Heaven
And the waves clasp one another ;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother ;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea :
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me ?

THE BIRTH OF PLEASURE

At the creation of the Earth
Pleasure, that divinest birth,
From the soil of Heaven did rise,
Wrapped in sweet wild melodies—
Like an exhalation wreathing
To the sound of air low-breathing
Through Aeolian pines, which make
A shade and shelter to the lake
Whence it rises soft and slow ;
Her life-breathing [limbs] did flow
In the harmony divine
Of an ever-lengthening line
Which enwrapped her perfect form
With a beauty clear and warm.

O

FRAGMENT: SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY

Is not to-day enough ? Why do I peer
Into the darkness of the day to come ?
Is not to-morrow even as yesterday ?
And will the day that follows change thy doom ?
Few flowers grow upon thy wintry way ;
And who waits for thee in that cheerless home
Whence thou hast fled, whither thou must return
Charged with the load that makes thee faint and mourn ?

FRAGMENT: 'YE GENTLE VISITATIONS
OF CALM THOUGHT'

YE gentle visitations of calm thought—
Moods like the memories of happier earth,
Which come arrayed in thoughts of little worth,
Like stars in clouds by the weak winds enwrought,—
But that the clouds depart and stars remain,
While they remain, and ye, alas, depart !

FRAGMENT: 'WAKE THE SERPENT NOT'

WAKE the serpent not—lest he
Should not know the way to go,—
Let him crawl which yet lies sleeping
Through the deep grass of the meadow !
Not a bee shall hear him creeping,
Not a may-fly shall awaken
From its cradling blue-bell shaken,
Not the starlight as he 's sliding
Through the grass with silent gliding.

FRAGMENT: WINE OF THE FAIRIES

I AM drunk with the honey wine
Of the moon-unfolded eglantine,
Which fairies catch in hyacinth bowls.
The bats, the dormice, and the moles

Sleep in the walls or under the sward
Of the desolate castle yard ;
And when 'tis spilt on the summer earth
Or its fumes arise among the dew,
Their jocund dreams are full of mirth,
They gibber their joy in sleep ; for few
Of the faeries bear those bowls so new !

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820

THE SENSITIVE PLANT

PART FIRST

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of Night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere ;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness, 10
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness ; 20

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green ;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense ;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast, 30
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare :

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Maenad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky ;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows ;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime. 40

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked, under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss, 50
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flow'rets which, drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it), 60

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun ;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root, 71
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver,—

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower ;
Radiance and odour are not its dower ;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the Beautiful !

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings ;
The beams which dart from many a star 80
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar ;

The plumèd insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass ;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
 Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
 Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
 Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears ;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide, 90
 Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
 In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
 Move, as reeds in a single stream ;

Each and all like ministering angels were
 For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear.
 Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
 Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from Heaven above,
 And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
 And delight, though less bright, was far more deep.
 And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep, 101

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were
 drowned

In an ocean of dreams without a sound ;
 Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress
 The light and which paves it, consciousness ;

(Only overhead the sweet nightingale
 Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
 And snatches of its Elysian chant
 Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant) ;—

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest 110
 Upgathered into the bosom of rest ;
 A sweet child weary of its delight,
 The feeblest and yet the favourite,
 Cradled within the embrace of Night.

PART SECOND

There was a Power in this sweet place,
 An Eve in this Eden ; a ruling Grace
 Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
 Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even :
And the meteors of that sublunar Heaven, 10
Like the lamps of the air when Night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth !

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise :

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted Heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her. 20

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed ;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her æery footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet ; 30
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam ;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder-showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and osier-bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants, she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly. 40

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore, in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,—

In a basket, of grasses and wild-flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris 49
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest Spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of Summertide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died ! 60

PART THIRD

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,
Like stars when the moon is awakened, were,
Or the waves of Baiae, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners, deep and low ;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death, 10
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin-plank ;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass ;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap 20
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift Summer into the Autumn flowed,
And frost in the mist of the morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose-leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue 30
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf by leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and gray, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed ;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the wingèd seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem, 40
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set ;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks
Were bent and tangled across the walks ;
And the leafless network of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin ; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow 50
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue, 60
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold ;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated !

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still, 70
The vapours arose which have strength to kill ;
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noonday
Unseen, every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant, like one forbid,
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves, which together grew, 80
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn,
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came: the wind was his whip:
One choppy finger was on his lip:
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound 90
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne
By the tenfold blasts of the Arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost!

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want:
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air 100
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew,

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
 Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
 Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy, and stiff,
 And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When Winter had gone and Spring came back 110
 The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck ;
 But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and
 darnels,
 Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
 Which within its boughs like a Spirit sat,
 Ere its outward form had known decay,
 Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
 No longer with the form combined
 Which scattered love, as stars do light, 120
 Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess ; but in this life
 Of error, ignorance, and strife,
 Where nothing is, but all things seem,
 And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
 Pleasant if one considers it,
 To own that death itself must be,
 Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that lady fair, 130
 And all sweet shapes and odours there,
 In truth have never passed away :
 'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed ; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
 There is no death nor change : their might
 Exceeds our organs, which endure
 No light, being themselves obscure.

THE CLOUD

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
 From the seas and the streams ;
 I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
 In their noonday dreams.
 From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
 The sweet buds every one,
 When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
 As she dances about the sun.
 I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
 And whiten the green plains under, 10
 And then again I dissolve it in rain,
 And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
 And their great pines groan aghast ;
 And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
 While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
 Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
 Lightning my pilot sits ;
 In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
 It struggles and howls at fits ; 20
 Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
 This pilot is guiding me,
 Lured by the love of the genu that move
 In the depths of the purple sea ;
 Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
 Over the lakes and the plains,
 Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
 The Spirit he loves remains ;
 And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
 Whilst he is dissolving in rains. 30

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
 And his burning plumes outspread,
 Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
 When the mooring star shines dead ;
 As on the jag of a mountain crag,
 Which an earthquake rocks and swings,

An eagle aht one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love, 40
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine aery nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orb'd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn ;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear, 50
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer ;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl ; 60
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam proof, I hang like a roof,—
The mountains its columns be
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-coloured bow ; 70
The sphere fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky ;

I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores ;
 I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
 The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
 Build up the blue dome of air, 80
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
 And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
 I arise and unbuild it again.

TO A SKYLARK

HAIL to thee, blithe Spirit !
 Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
 Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire ;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.
 In the golden lightning 11
 Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
 Thou dost float and run ;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.
 The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight
 Like a star of Heaven,
 In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight, 20
 Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
 In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is over-
flowed. 30

What thou art we know not ;
What is most like thee ?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not: 40

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower :

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its acreal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the
view ! 50

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged
thieves :

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass :
Teach us, Sprite or Bird, 61
What sweet thoughts are thine :
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains 71
Of thy happy strain ?
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
What shapes of sky or plain ?
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of pain ?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be :
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee :
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety. 80

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest
thought. 90

Yet if we could scorn
 Hate, and pride, and fear ;
 If we were things born
 Not to shed a tear,
 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
 —Of delightful sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found,
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness 101
 That thy brain must know,
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow
 The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

ODE TO LIBERTY

Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying,
 Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind.—BYRON.

I

A GLORIOUS people vibrated again
 The lightning of the nations : Liberty
 From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,
 Scattering contagious fire into the sky,
 Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,
 And in the rapid plumes of song
 Clothed itself, sublime and strong,
 (As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,)
 Hovering in verse o'er its accustomed prey ;
 Till from its station in the Heaven of fame 10
 The Spirit's whirlwind rapt it, and the ray
 Of the remotest sphere of living flame
 Which paves the void was from behind it flung,
 As foam from a ship's swiftess, when there came
 A voice out of the deep : I will record the same.

II

The Sun and the serenest Moon sprang forth :
 The burning stars of the abyss were hurled
 Into the depths of Heaven. The dædal earth,
 That island in the ocean of the world,
 Hung in its cloud of all-sustaining air : 20
 But this divinest universe
 Was yet a chaos and a curse,
 For thou wert not : but, power from worst producing
 worse,
 The spirit of the beasts was kindled there,
 And of the birds, and of the watery forms,
 And there was war among them, and despair
 Within them, raging without truce or terms :
 The bosom of their violated nurse
 Groaned, for beasts warred on beasts, and worms on
 worms,
 And men on men ; each heart was as a hell of storms.

III

Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied 31
 His generations under the pavilion
 Of the Sun's throne : palace and pyramid,
 Temple and prison, to many a swarming million
 Were, as to mountain-wolves their ragged caves.
 This human living multitude
 Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,
 For thou wert not ; but o'er the populous solitude,
 Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves,
 Hung Tyranny ; beneath, sate deified 40
 The sister-pest, congregator of slaves ;
 Into the shadow of her pinions wide
 Anarchs and priests, who feed on gold and blood
 Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,
 Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

IV

The nodding promontories, and blue isles,
 And cloud-like mountains, and dividuous waves
 Of Greece, basked glorious in the open smiles
 Of favouring Heaven : from their enchanted caves

Prophetic echoes flung dim melody. 50
 On the unapprehensive wild
 The vine, the corn, the olive mild,
 Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled ;
 And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,
 Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,
 Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,
 Art's deathless dreams lay veiled by many a vein
 Of Parian stone ; and, yet a speechless child,
 Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain
 Her lidless eyes for thee ; when o'er the Aegean main

V

Athens arose : a city such as vision 61
 Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
 Of battlemented cloud, as in derision
 Of kingliest masonry : the ocean-floors
 Pave it ; the evening sky pavilions it ;
 Its portals are inhabited
 By thunder-zonèd winds, each head
 Within its cloudy wings with sun-fire garlanded,—
 A divine work ! Athens, diviner yet,
 Gleamed with its crest of columns, on the will 70
 Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set ;
 For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill
 Peopled, with forms that mock the eternal dead
 In marble immortality, that hill
 Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle.

VI

Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
 Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay
 Immovably unquiet, and for ever
 It trembles, but it cannot pass away !
 The voices of thy bards and sages thunder 80
 With an earth-awakening blast
 Through the caverns of the past :
 (Religion veils her eyes ; Oppression shrinks aghast :)

A wingèd sound of joy, and love, and wonder,
 Which soars where Expectation never flew,
 Rending the veil of space and time asunder !
 One ocean feeds the clouds, and streams, and dew ;
 One Sun illumines Heaven ; one Spirit vast
 With life and love makes chaos ever new, 89
 As Athens doth the world with thy delight renew.

VII

Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest,
 Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmaean Maenad¹,
 She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest
 From that Elysian food was yet unweanèd ;
 And many a deed of terrible uprightness
 By thy sweet love was sanctified ;
 And in thy smile, and by thy side,
 Saintly Camillus lived, and firm Atilius died.
 But when tears stained thy robe of vestal whiteness,
 And gold profaned thy Capitolian throne, 100
 Thou didst desert, with spirit-wingèd lightness,
 The senate of the tyrants : they sunk prone
 Slaves of one tyrant : Palatinus sighed
 Faint echoes of Ionian song ; that tone
 Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown.

VIII

From what Hyrcanian glen or frozen hill,
 Or piny promontory of the Arctic main,
 Or utmost islet inaccessible,
 Didst thou lament the ruin of thy reign,
 Teaching the woods and waves, and desert rocks, 110
 And every Naiad's ice-cold urn,
 To talk in echoes sad and stern
 Of that sublimest lore which man had dared unlearn ?
 For neither didst thou watch the wizard flocks
 Of the Scald's dreams, nor haunt the Druid's sleep.
 What if the tears rained through thy shattered locks
 Were quickly dried ? for thou didst groan, not
 weep,

¹ See the *Bacchae* of Euripides.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]

When from its sea of death, to kill and burn,
 The Galilean serpent forth did creep,
 And made thy world an undistinguishable heap. 120

IX

A thousand years the Earth cried, 'Where art thou?'
 And then the shadow of thy coming fell
 On Saxon Alfred's olive-cinctured brow:
 And many a warrior-peopled citadel,
 Like rocks which fire lifts out of the flat deep,
 Arose in sacred Italy,
 Frowning o'er the tempestuous sea
 Of kings, and priests, and slaves, in tower-crowned
 majesty;
 That multitudinous anarchy did sweep
 And burst around their walls, like idle foam, 130
 Whilst from the human spirit's deepest deep
 Strange melody with love and awe struck dumb
 Dissonant arms; and Art, which cannot die,
 With divine wand traced on our earthly home
 Fit imagery to pave Heaven's everlasting dome.

X

Thou huntress swifter than the Moon! thou terror
 Of the world's wolves! thou bearer of the quiver,
 Whose sunlike shafts pierce tempest-wingèd Error.
 As light may pierce the clouds when they dis sever
 In the calm regions of the orient day! 140
 Luther caught thy wakening glance;
 Like lightning, from his leaden lance
 Reflected, it dissolved the visions of the trance
 In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay;
 And England's prophets hailed thee as their queen,
 In songs whose music cannot pass away,
 Though it must flow forever: not unseen
 Before the spirit-sighted countenance
 Of Milton didst thou pass, from the sad scene
 Beyond whose night he saw, with a dejected mien.

XI

The eager hours and unreluctant years 151
 As on a dawn-illuminated mountain stood,
 Trampling to silence their loud hopes and fears,
 Darkening each other with their multitude,
 And cried aloud, 'Liberty!' Indignation
 Answered Pity from her cave;
 Death grew pale within the grave,
 And Desolation howled to the destroyer, Save!
 When like Heaven's Sun girt by the exhalation
 Of its own glorious light, thou didst arise, 160
 Chasing thy foes from nation unto nation
 Like shadows: as if day had cloven the skies
 At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,
 Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,
 Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

XII

Thou Heaven of earth! what spells could pall thee then
 In ominous eclipse? a thousand years
 Bred from the slime of deep Oppression's den,
 Dyed all thy liquid light with blood and tears,
 Till thy sweet stars could weep the stain away; 170
 How like Bacchanals of blood
 Round France, the ghastly vintage, stood
 Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood!
 When one, like them, but mightier far than they,
 The Anarch of thine own bewildered powers,
 Rose: armies mingled in obscure array,
 Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred
 bowers
 Of serene Heaven. He, by the past pursued,
 Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,
 Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral
 towers. 180

XIII

England yet sleeps: was she not called of old?
 Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder
 Vesuvius wakens Aetna, and the cold
 Snow-crags by its reply are cloven in sunder:

O'er the lit waves every Aeolian isle
 From Pithecusa to Pelorus
 Howls, and leaps, and glares in chorus :
 They cry, ' Be dim ; ye lamps of Heaven suspended
 o'er us ! '

Her chains are threads of gold, she need but smile
 And they dissolve ; but Spain's were links of steel,
 Till bit to dust by virtue's keenest file. 191
 Twins of a single destiny ! appeal
 To the eternal years enthroned before us
 In the dim West ; impress us from a seal,
 All ye have thought and done ! Time cannot dare
 conceal.

XIV

Tomb of Arminius ! render up thy dead
 Till, like a standard from a watch-tower's staff,
 His soul may stream over the tyrant's head ;
 Thy victory shall be his epitaph,
 Wild Bacchanal of truth's mysterious wine, 200
 King-deluded Germany,
 His dead spirit lives in thee.
 Why do we fear or hope ? thou art already free !
 And thou, lost Paradise of this divine
 And glorious world ! thou flowery wilderness !
 Thou island of eternity ! thou shrine
 Where Desolation, clothed with loveliness,
 Worships the thing thou wert ! O Italy,
 Gather thy blood into thy heart ; repress
 The beasts who make their dens thy sacred palaces.

XV

Oh, that the free would stamp the impious name 211
 Of KING into the dust ! or write it there,
 So that this blot upon the page of fame
 Were as a serpent's path, which the light air
 Erases, and the flat sands close behind !
 Ye the oracle have heard :
 Lift the victory-flashing sword,
 And cut the snaky knots of this foul gordian word,
 Which, weak itself as stubble, yet can bind

Into a mass, irrefragably firm, 220
 The axes and the rods which awe mankind ;
 The sound has poison in it, 'tis the sperm
 Of what makes life foul, cankerous, and abhorred ;
 Disdain not thou, at thine appointed term,
 To set thine armed heel on this reluctant worm.

XVI

Oh, that the wise from their bright minds would kindle
 Such lamps within the dome of this dim world,
 That the pale name of PRIEST might shrink and dwindle
 Into the hell from which it first was hurled,
 A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure ; 230
 Till human thoughts might kneel alone,
 Each before the judgement-throne
 Of its own aweless soul, or of the Power unknown !
 Oh, that the words which make the thoughts obscure
 From which they spring, as clouds of glimmering
 dew
 From a white lake blot Heaven's blue portraiture,
 Were stripped of their thin masks and various hue
 And frowns and smiles and splendours not their own,
 Till in the nakedness of false and true
 They stand before their Lord, each to receive its due !

XVII

He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever 241
 Can be between the cradle and the grave
 Crowned him the King of Life. Oh, vain endeavour !
 If on his own high will, a willing slave,
 He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.
 What if earth can clothe and feed
 Amplest millions at their need,
 And power in thought be as the tree within the seed ?
 Or what if Art, an ardent intercessor,
 Driving on fiery wings to Nature's throne, 250
 Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,

And cries: 'Give me, thy child, dominion
 Over all height and depth' ? if Life can breed
 New wants, and wealth from those who toil and
 groan,
 Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousandfold for one !

XVIII

Come thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
 Of man's deep spirit, as the morning-star
 Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave,
 Wisdom. I hear the pennons of her car
 Self-moving, like cloud charioted by flame ; 260
 Comes she not, and come ye not,
 Rulers of eternal thought,
 To judge, with solemn truth, life's ill-apportioned lot ?
 Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Fame
 Of what has been, the Hope of what will be ?
 O Liberty ! if such could be thy name
 Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee :
 If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought
 By blood or tears, have not the wise and free
 Wept tears, and blood like tears ?—The solemn
 harmony 270

XIX

Paused, and the Spirit of that mighty singing
 To its abyss was suddenly withdrawn ;
 Then, as a wild swan, when sublimely winging
 Its path athwart the thunder-smoke of dawn,
 Sinks headlong through the æreal golden light
 On the heavy-sounding plain,
 When the bolt has pierced its brain ;
 As summer clouds dissolve, unburthened of their rain ;
 As a far taper fades with fading night,
 As a brief insect dies with dying day,— 280
 My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,
 Drooped ; o'er it closed the echoes far away
 Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
 As waves which lately paved his watery way
 Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous
 play.

TO ———

I

I FEAR thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine ;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.

II

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine ;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine.

ARETHUSA

I

ARETHUSA arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams ;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams ;
And gliding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep ;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

II

Then Alpheus bold,
 On his glacier cold, 20
 With his trident the mountains strook ;
 And opened a chasm
 In the rocks—with the spasm
 All Erymanthus shook.
 And the black south wind
 It unsealed behind
 The urns of the silent snow,
 And earthquake and thunder
 Did rend in sunder
 The bars of the springs below. 30
 And the beard and the hair
 Of the River-god were
 Scen through the torrent's sweep,
 As he followed the light
 Of the fleet nymph's flight
 To the brink of the Dorian deep.

III

' Oh, save me ! Oh, guide me !
 And bid the deep hide me,
 For he grasps me now by the hair
 The loud Ocean heard, 40
 To its blue depth stirred,
 And divided at her prayer ;
 And under the water
 The Earth's white daughter
 Fled like a sunny beam ;
 Behind her descended
 Her billows, unblended
 With the brackish Dorian stream :—
 Like a gloomy stain
 On the emerald main 50
 Alpheus rushed behind,—
 As an eagle pursuing
 A dove to its ruin
 Down the streams of the cloudy wind.

IV

Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearlèd thrones ;
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones ; 60
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a network of coloured light ;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night :—
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the Ocean's foam,
And up through the rifts 70
Of the mountain cliffs
They passed to their Dorian home.

V

And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sunrise they leap
From their cradles steep 80
In the cave of the shelving hill ;
At noontide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of asphodel ;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore ;—
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more. 90

SONG OF PROSERPINE

WHILE GATHERING FLOWERS ON THE PLAIN OF ENNA

I

SACRED Goddess, Mother Earth,
Thou from whose immortal bosom
Gods, and men, and beasts have birth,
Leaf and blade, and bud and blossom,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

II

If with mists of evening dew
Thou dost nourish these young flowers
Till they grow, in scent and hue,
Fairest children of the Hours,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

HYMN OF APOLLO

I

THE sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,—
Waken me when their Mother, the gray Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.

II

Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
I walk over the mountains and the waves,
Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam ;
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire ; the caves
Are filled with my bright presence, and the air II
Leaves the green Earth to my embraces bare.

III

The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill
Decert, that loves the night and fears the day :
All men who do or even imagine ill
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray
Good minds and open actions take new might,
Until diminished by the reign of Night.

IV

I feed the clouds, the rainbows and the flowers
With their aethereal colours ; the moon's globe 20
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe ;
Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine
Are portions of one power, which is mine.

V

I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,
Then with unwilling steps I wander down
Into the clouds of the Atlantic even ;
For grief that I depart they weep and frown :
What look is more delightful than the smile
With which I soothe them from the western isle ? 30

VI

I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine ;
All harmony of instrument or verse,
All prophecy, all medicine is mine,
All light of art or nature ;—to my song
Victory and praise in its own right belong.

HYMN OF PAN

I

From the forests and highlands
We come, we come ;
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb

Listening to my sweet pipings.
 The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
 The bees on the bells of thyme,
 The birds on the myrtle bushes,
 The cicale above in the lime,
 And the lizards below in the grass, 10
 Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,
 Listening to my sweet pipings.

II

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
 And all dark Tempe lay
 In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
 The light of the dying day,
 Speeded by my sweet pipings.
 The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
 And the Nymphs of the woods and the waves,
 To the edge of the moist river-lawns, 20
 And the brink of the dewy caves,
 And all that did then attend and follow,
 Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
 With envy of my sweet pipings.

III

I sang of the dancing stars,
 I sang of the daedal Earth,
 And of Heaven—and the giant wars,
 And Love, and Death, and Birth,—
 And then I changed my pipings,—
 Singing how down the vale of Maenalus 30
 I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed.
 Gods and men, we are all deluded thus !
 It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed :
 All wept, as I think both ye now would,
 If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
 At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

THE QUESTION

I

I DREAMED that, as I wandered by the way,
 Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
 And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
 Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
 Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
 Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
 But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

II

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
 Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth, 10
 The constellated flower that never sets ;
 Faint oxslips ; tender bluebells, at whose birth
 The sod scarce heaved ; and that tall flower that wets—
 Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth—
 Its mother's face with Heaven's collected tears,
 When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

III

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
 Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured may,
 And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
 Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day ; 20
 And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
 With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray ;
 And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
 Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

IV

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
 There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with
 white,
 And starry river buds among the sedge,
 And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,

Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
 With moonlight beams of their own watery light ; 30
 And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
 As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

v

Methought that of these visionary flowers
 I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
 That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
 Were mingled or opposed, the like array
 Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
 Within my hand,—and then, elate and gay,
 I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
 That I might there present it !—Oh ! to whom ? 40

THE TWO SPIRITS: AN ALLEGORY

First Spirit.

O THOU, who plumed with strong desire
 Wouldst float above the earth, beware !
 A Shadow tracks thy flight of fire—
 Night is coming !
 Bright are the regions of the air,
 And among the winds and beams
 It were delight to wander there—
 Night is coming !

Second Spirit.

The deathless stars are bright above ;
 If I would cross the shade of night, 10
 Within my heart is the lamp of love,
 And that is day !
 And the moon will smile with gentle light
 On my golden plumes where'er they move ;
 The meteors will linger round my flight,
 And make night day.

First Spirit.

But if the whirlwinds of darkness waken
 Hail, and lightning, and stormy rain ;

See, the bounds of the air are shaken—

Night is coming !

20

The red swift clouds of the hurricane

Yon declining sun have overtaken,

The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain—

Night is coming !

Second Spirit.

I see the light, and I hear the sound ;

I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark,

With the calm within and the light around

Which makes night day :

And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,

Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound, 30

My moon-like flight thou then mayst mark

On high, far away.

Some say there is a precipice

Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin

O'er piles of snow and chasms of ice

Mid Alpine mountains ;

And that the languid storm pursuing

That wingèd shape, for ever flies

Round those hoar branches, aye renewing

Its æry fountains.

40

Some say when nights are dry and clear,

And the death-dews sleep on the morass,

Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller,

Which make night day :

And a silver shape like his early love doth pass

Upborne by her wild and glittering hair,

And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,

He finds night day.

ODE TO NAPLES

EPODE I α

I stood within the City disinterred¹ ;

And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls

Of spirits passing through the streets ; and heard

¹ Pompeii.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]

The Mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
 Thrill through those roofless halls ;
 The oracular thunder penetrating shook
 The listening soul in my suspended blood ;
 I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke—
 I felt, but heard not :—through white columns glowed
 The isle-sustaining ocean-flood, 10
 A plane of light between two heavens of azure !
 Around me gleamed many a bright sepulchre
 Of whose pure beauty, Time, as if his pleasure
 Were to spare Death, had never made erasure ;
 But every living lineament was clear
 As in the sculptor's thought ; and there
 The wreaths of stony myrtle, ivy, and pine,
 Like winter leaves o'ergrown by moulded snow,
 Seemed only not to move and grow
 Because the crystal silence of the air 20
 Weighed on their life ; even as the Power divine
 Which then lulled all things, brooded upon mine.

EPODE II a

Then gentle winds arose
 With many a mingled close
 Of wild Aeolian sound, and mountain-odours keen ;
 And where the Baian ocean
 Welters with airlike motion,
 Within, above, around its bowers of starry green,
 Moving the sea-flowers in those purple caves,
 Even as the ever stormless atmosphere 30
 Floats o'er the Elysian realm,
 It bore me, like an Angel, o'er the waves
 Of sunlight, whose swift pinnacle of dewy air
 No storm can overwhelm.
 I sailed, where ever flows
 Under the calm Serene
 A spirit of deep emotion
 From the unknown graves
 Of the dead Kings of Melody¹.

¹ Homer and Virgil.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]

Shadowy Aornos darkened o'er the helm 40
 The horizontal aether; Heaven stripped bare
 Its depth over Elysium, where the prow
 Made the invisible water white as snow;
 From that Typhaean mount, Inarime,
 There streamed a sunbright vapour, like the standard
 Of some aethereal host;
 Whilst from all the coast,
 Louder and louder, gathering round, there wandered
 Over the oracular woods and divine sea
 Propheesyings which grew articulate— 50
 They seize me—I must speak them!—be they fate!

STROPHE I

Naples! thou Heart of men which ever pantest
 Naked, beneath the lidless eye of Heaven!
 Elysian City, which to calm enchantest
 The mutinous air and sea! they round thee, even
 As sleep round Love, are driven!
 Metropolis of a ruined Paradise
 Long lost, late won, and yet but half regained!
 Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice,
 Which armèd Victory offers up unstained 60
 To Love, the flower-enchained!
 Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
 Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
 If Hope, and Truth, and Justice can avail,—
 Hail, hail, all hail!

STROPHE II

Thou youngest giant birth
 Which from the groaning earth
 Leap'st, clothed in armour of impenetrable scale!
 Last of the Intercessors!
 Who 'gainst the Crowned Transgressors 70
 Pleadest before God's love! Arrayed in Wisdom's mail,
 Wave thy lightning lance in mirth
 Nor let thy high heart fail,
 Though from their hundred gates the leagued Oppressors
 With hurried legions move!
 Hail, hail, all hail!

ANTISTROPHE I α

What though Cimmerian Anarchs dare blaspheme
 Freedom and thee ? thy shield is as a mirror
 To make their blind slaves see, and with fierce gleam
 To turn his hungry sword upon the wearer ; 80
 A new Actæon's error
 Shall theirs have been—devoured by their own hounds !
 Be thou like the imperial Basilisk
 Killing thy foe with unapparent wounds !
 Gaze on Oppression, till at that dread risk
 Aghast she pass from the Earth's disk :
 Fear not, but gaze—for freemen mightier grow,
 And slaves more feeble, gazing on their foe :—
 If Hope, and Truth, and Justice may avail,
 Thou shalt be great—All hail ! 90

ANTISTROPHE II α

 From Freedom's form divine,
 From Nature's inmost shrine,
 Strip every impious gawd, rend Error veil by veil ;
 O'er Ruin desolate,
 O'er Falsehood's fallen state,
 Sit thou sublime, unawed ; be the Destroyer pale !
 And equal laws be thine,
 And wingèd words let sail,
 Freightèd with truth even from the throne of God :
 That wealth, surviving fate, 100
 Be thine.—All hail !

ANTISTROPHE I β

Didst thou not start to hear Spain's thrilling pæan
 From land to land re-echoed solemnly,
 Till silence became music ? From the Aeæan ¹
 To the cold Alps, eternal Italy
 Starts to hear thine ! The Sea
 Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs
 In light and music ; widowed Genoa wan
 By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,

¹ Aeæa, the island of Circe.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]

ODE TO NAPLES

423

Murmuring, 'Where is Doria?' fair Milan, 110
 Within whose veins long ran
 The viper's¹ palsyng venom, lifts her heel
 To bruise his head. The signal and the seal
 (If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail)
 Art thou of all these hopes.—O hail!

ANTISTROPHE II β

Florence! beneath the sun,
 Of cities fairest one,
 Blushes within her bower for Freedom's expectation:
 From eyes of quenchless hope
 Rome tears the priestly cope, 120
 As ruling once by power, so now by admiration,—
 An athlete stripped to run
 From a remoter station
 For the high prize lost on Philippi's shore:—
 As then Hope, Truth, and Justice did avail,
 So now may Fraud and Wrong! O hail!

EPODE I β

Hear ye the march as of the Earth-born Forms
 Arrayed against the ever-living Gods?
 The crash and darkness of a thousand storms
 Bursting their inaccessible abodes 130
 Of crags and thunder-clouds?
 See ye the banners blazoned to the day,
 Inwrought with emblems of barbaric pride?
 Dissonant threats kill Silence far away,
 The serene Heaven which wraps our Eden wide
 With iron light is dyed;
 The Anarchs of the North lead forth their legions
 Like Chaos o'er creation, uncreating;
 An hundred tribes nourished on strange religions
 And lawless slaveries,—down the aerial regions 140
 Of the white Alps, desolating,
 Famished wolves that bide no waiting,

¹ The viper was the armorial device of the Visconti, tyrants of Milan.—[SHELLEY'S NOTE.]

Blotting the glowing footsteps of old glory,
 Trampling our columned cities into dust,
 Their dull and savage lust
 On Beauty's corse to sickness satiating—
 They come ! The fields they tread look black and hoary
 With fire—from their red feet the streams run gory !

EPODE II β

Great Spirit, deepest Love !
 Which rulest and dost move 150
 All things which live and are, within the Italian shore ;
 Who spicadest Heaven around it,
 Whose woods, rocks, waves, surround it ;
 Who sittest in thy star, o'er Ocean's western floor ;
 Spirit of beauty ! at whose soft command
 The sunbeams and the showers distil its foison
 From the Earth's bosom chill ;
 Oh, bid those beams be each a blinding brand
 Of lightning ! bid those showers be dews of poison !
 Bid the Earth's plenty kill ! 160
 Bid thy bright Heaven above,
 Whilst light and darkness bound it,
 Be their tomb who planned
 To make it ours and thine !
 Or, with thine harmonizing ardours fill
 And raise thy sons, as o'er the prone horizon
 Thy lamp feeds every twilight wave with fire—
 Be man's high hope and unextinct desire
 The instrument to work thy will divine !
 Then clouds from sunbeams, antelopes from leopards,
 And frowns and fears from thee, 171
 Would not more swiftly flee
 Than Celtic wolves from the Ausonian shepherds.—
 Whatever, Spirit, from thy starry shrine
 Thou yieldest or withholdest, oh, let be
 This city of thy worship ever free !

AUTUMN: A DIRGE

I

THE warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the Year
On the earth her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, Months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array ;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold Year, 10
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

II

The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the Year ;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
To his dwelling ;
Come, Months, come away ;
Put on white, black, and gray ;
Let your light sisters play—
Ye, follow the bier 20
Of the dead cold Year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

THE WANING MOON

AND like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky East,
A white and shapeless mass—

TO THE MOON

I

ART thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,—
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy ?

II

Thou chosen sister of the Spirit,
That gazes on thee till in thee it pities . . .

DEATH

I

DEATH is here and death is there,
Death is busy everywhere,
All around, within, beneath,
Above is death—and we are death.

II

Death has set his mark and seal
On all we are and all we feel,
On all we know and all we fear,

. . .

III

First our pleasures die—and then
Our hopes, and then our fears—and when
These are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust—and we die too.

IV

All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves must fade and perish ;
Such is our rude mortal lot—
Love itself would, did they not.

LIBERTY

I

THE fiery mountains answer each other ;
Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone ;
The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round Winter's throne,
When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.

II

From a single cloud the lightening flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around,
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
An hundred are shuddering and tottering ; the sound
Is bellowing underground. 10

III

But keener thy gaze than the lightening's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp ;
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean ; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanoes ; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.

IV

From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapour and blast ;
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet thy dawning is cast,—
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night 20
In the van of the morning light.

SUMMER AND WINTER

It was a bright and cheerful afternoon,
Towards the end of the sunny month of June,
When the north wind congregates in crowds
The floating mountains of the silver clouds
From the horizon—and the stainless sky
Opens beyond them like eternity.
All things rejoiced beneath the sun ; the weeds,
The river, and the corn-fields, and the reeds ;

*The willow leaves that glanced in the light breeze,
And the firm foliage of the larger trees.*

It was a winter such as when birds die
In the deep forests ; and the fishes lie
Stiffened in the translucent ice, which **makes**
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
A wrinkled clod as hard as brick ; and when,
Among their children, comfortable men
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold :
Alas, then, for the homeless beggar old !

THE TOWER OF FAMINE

AMID the desolation of a city,
Which was the cradle, and is now the grave
Of an extinguished people,—so that Pity
Weeps o'er the shipwrecks of Oblivion's wave,
There stands the Tower of Famine. It is built
Upon some prison-homes, whose dwellers rave
For bread, and gold, and blood : Pain, linked to Guilt,
Agitates the light flame of their hours,
Until its vital oil is spent or spilt.

There stands the pile, a tower amid the towers 10
And sacred domes ; each marble-ribbed roof,
The brazen-gated temples, and the bowers

Of solitary wealth,—the tempest-proof
Pavilions of the dark Italian air,—
Are by its presence dimmed—they stand aloof,

And are withdrawn—so that the world is bare ;
As if a spectre wrapped in shapeless terror
Amid a company of ladies fair

Should glide and glow, till it became a mirror
Of all their beauty, and their hair and hue, 20
The life of their sweet eyes, with all its error,
Should be absorbed, till they to marble grew.

AN ALLEGORY

I

A PORTAL as of shadowy adamant
Stands yawning on the highway of the life
Which we all tread, a cavern huge and gaunt ;
Around it rages an unceasing strife
Of shadows, like the restless clouds that haunt
The gap of some cleft mountain, lifted high
Into the whirlwinds of the upper sky.

II

And many pass it by with careless tread,
Not knowing that a shadowy . . .
Tracks every traveller even to where the dead
Wait peacefully for their companion new ;
But others, by more curious humour led,
Pause to examine ;—these are very few,
And they learn little there, except to know
That shadows follow them where'er they go.

THE WORLD'S WANDERERS

I

TELL me, thou Star, whose wings of light
Speed thee in thy fiery flight,
In what cavern of the night
Will thy pinions close now ?

II

Tell me, Moon, thou pale and gray
Pilgrim of Heaven's homeless way,
In what depth of night or day
Seekest thou repose now ?

III

Weary Wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or billow ?

SONNET

YE hasten to the grave ! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear ?
O thou quick heart, which pantest to possess
All that pale Expectation feigneth fair !
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldest guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou must go,
And all that never yet was known would know—
Oh, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press,
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking, alike from happiness and woe,
A refuge in the cavern of gray death ?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts ! what thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below ?

LINES TO A REVIEWER

ALAS, good friend, what profit can you see
In hating such a hateless thing as me ?
There is no sport in hate where all the rage
Is on one side : in vain would you assuage
Your frowns upon an unresisting smile,
In which not even contempt lurks to beguile
Your heart, by some faint sympathy of hate.
Oh, conquer what you cannot satiate !
For to your passion I am far more coy
Than ever yet was coldest maid or boy
In winter noon. Of your antipathy
If I am the Narcissus, you are free
To pine into a sound with hating me.

GOOD-NIGHT

I

GOOD-NIGHT ? ah ! no ; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite ;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be *good* night.

II

How can I call the lone night good,
Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight ?
Be it not said, thought, understood—
Then it will be—*good* night.

III

To hearts which near each other move
From evening close to morning light,
The night is good ; because, my love,
They never *say* good-night.

ORPHEUS

A. Not far from hence. From yonder pointed hill,
Crowned with a ring of oaks, you may behold
A dark and barren field, through which there flows,
Sluggish and black, a deep but narrow stream,
Which the wind ripples not, and the fair moon
Gazes in vain, and finds no mirror there.
Follow the herbless banks of that strange brook
Until you pause beside a darksome pond,
The fountain of this rivulet, whose gush
Cannot be seen, hid by a rayless night
That lives beneath the overhanging rock
That shades the pool—an endless spring of gloom,
Upon whose edge hovers the tender light,
Trembling to mingle with its paramour,—
But, as Syrinx fled Pan, so night flies day,
Or, with most sullen and regardless hate,
Refuses stern her heaven-born embrace.
On one side of this jagged and shapeless hill
There is a cave, from which there eddies up
A pale mist, like aerial gossamer,
Whose breath destroys all life—awhile it veils
The rock—then, scattered by the wind, it flies
Along the stream, or lingers on the clefts,
Killing the sleepy worms, if aught bide there.
Upon the beetling edge of that dark rock
There stands a group of cypresses ; not such

10

20

As, with a graceful spire and stirring life,
 Pierce the pure heaven of your native vale.
 Whose branches the air plays among, but not
 Disturbs, fearing to spoil their solemn grace ; 30
 But blasted and all wearily they stand,
 One to another clinging ; their weak boughs
 Sigh as the wind buffets them, and they shake
 Beneath its blasts—a weatherbeaten crew !

Chorus. What wondrous sound is that, mournful and
 faint,

But more melodious than the murmuring wind
 Which through the columns of a temple glides ?

A. It is the wandering voice of Orpheus' lyre,
 Borne by the winds, who sigh that their rude king
 Hurries them fast from these air-feeding notes ; 40
 But in their speed they bear along with them
 The waning sound, scattering it like dew
 Upon the startled sense.

Chorus. Does he still sing ?
 Methought he rashly cast away his harp
 When he had lost Eurydice.

A. Ah, no !
 Awhile he paused. As a poor hunted stag
 A moment shudders on the fearful brink
 Of a swift stream—the cruel hounds press on
 With deafening yell, the arrows glance and wound,—
 He plunges in : so Orpheus, seized and torn 50
 By the sharp fangs of an insatiate grief,
 Maenad-like waved his lyre in the bright air,
 And wildly shrieked ' Where she is, it is dark ! '
 And then he struck from forth the strings a sound
 Of deep and fearful melody. Alas !
 In times long past, when fair Eurydice
 With her bright eyes sat listening by his side,
 He gently sang of high and heavenly themes.
 As in a brook, fretted with little waves
 By the light airs of spring—each riplet makes 60
 A many-sided mirror for the sun,
 While it flows musically through green banks,
 Ceaseless and pauseless, ever clear and fresh,

So flowed his song, reflecting the deep joy
 And tender love that fed those sweetest notes,
 The heavenly offspring of ambrosial food.
 But that is past. Returning from drear Hell,
 He chose a lonely seat of unhewn stone,
 Blackened with lichens, on a herbless plain.
 Then from the deep and overflowing spring 70
 Of his eternal ever-moving grief
 There rose to Heaven a sound of angry song.
 'Tis as a mighty cataract that parts
 Two sister rocks with waters swift and strong,
 And casts itself with horrid roar and din
 Adown a steep; from a perennial source
 It ever flows and falls, and breaks the air
 With loud and fierce, but most harmonious roar,
 And as it falls casts up a vaporious spray
 Which the sun clothes in hues of Iris light. 80
 Thus the tempestuous torrent of his grief
 Is clothed in sweetest sounds and varying words
 Of poesy. Unlike all human works,
 It never slackens, and through every change
 Wisdom and beauty and the power divine
 Of mighty poesy together dwell,
 Mingling in sweet accord. As I have seen
 A fierce south blast tear through the darkened sky,
 Driving along a rack of winged clouds,
 Which may not pause, but ever hurry on, 90
 As their wild shepherd wills them, while the stars,
 Twinkling and dim, peep from between the plumes.
 Anon the sky is cleared, and the high dome
 Of serene Heaven, starred with fiery flowers,
 Shuts in the shaken earth; or the still moon
 Swiftly, yet gracefully, begins her walk,
 Rising all bright behind the eastern hills.
 I talk of moon, and wind, and stars, and not
 Of song; but, would I echo his high song,
 Nature must lend me words ne'er used before, 100
 Or I must borrow from her perfect works,
 To picture forth his perfect attributes.
 He does no longer sit upon his throne

Of rock upon a desert herbless plain,
 For the evergreen and knotted ilexes,
 And cypresses that seldom wave their boughs,
 And sea-green olives with their grateful fruit,
 And elms dragging along the twisted vines,
 Which drop their berries as they follow fast,
 And blackthorn bushes with their infant race 110
 Of blushing rose-blooms ; beeches, to lovers dear,
 And weeping willow trees ; all swift or slow,
 As their huge boughs or lighter dress permit,
 Have circled in his throne, and Earth herself
 Has sent from her maternal breast a growth
 Of starlike flowers and herbs of odour sweet,
 To pave the temple that his poesy
 Has framed, while near his feet grim lions couch,
 And kids, fearless from love, creep near his lair.
 Even the blind worms seem to feel the sound. 120
 The birds are silent, hanging down their heads,
 Perched on the lowest branches of the trees ;
 Not even the nightingale intrudes a note
 In rivalry, but all entranced she listens.

FIORDISPINA

THE season was the childhood of sweet June,
 Whose sunny hours from morning until noon
 Went creeping through the day with silent feet,
 Each with its load of pleasure ; slow yet sweet ;
 Like the long years of blest Eternity
 Never to be developed. Joy to thee,
 Fiordispina and thy Cosimo,
 For thou the wonders of the depth canst know
 Of this unfathomable flood of hours,
 Sparkling beneath the heaven which embowers— 10

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
 Except that from the catalogue of sins
 Nature had rased their love—which could not be
 But by dissevering their nativity.

And so they grew together like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in their purple prime,
Which the same hand will gather—the same clime
Shake with decay. This fair day smiles to see
All those who love—and who e'er loved like thee, 20
Fiordispina ? Scarcely Cosimo,
Within whose bosom and whose brain now glow
The ardours of a vision which obscure
The very idol of its portraiture.
He faints, dissolved into a sea of love ;
But thou art as a planet sphered above ;
But thou art Love itself—ruling the motion
Of his subjected spirit : such emotion
Must end in sin and sorrow, if sweet May
Had not brought forth this morn—your wedding-day,

TIME LONG PAST

I

LIKE the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever fled,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was Time long past.

II

There were sweet dreams in the night
Of Time long past :
And, was it sadness or delight,
Each day a shadow onward cast
Which made us wish it yet might last—
That Time long past.

III

There is regret, almost remorse,
For Time long past.
'Tis like a child's beloved corse
A father watches, till at last
Beauty is like remembrance, cast
From Time long past.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821

DIRGE FOR THE YEAR

I

ORPHAN Hours, the Year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep !
Merry Hours, smile instead,
For the Year is but asleep.
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

II

As an earthquake rocks a corse
In its coffin in the clay,
So White Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the death-cold Year to-day ; 10
Solemn Hours ! wail aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

III

As the wild air stirs and sways
The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
Rocks the Year :—be calm and mild,
Trembling Hours, she will arise
With new love within her eyes.

IV

January gray is here,
Like a sexton by her grave ; 20
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave,
And April weeps—but, O ye Hours !
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

TO NIGHT

I

SWIFTLY walk o'er the western wave,
 Spirit of Night !
 Out of the misty eastern cave,
 Where, all the long and lone daylight,
 Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
 Which make thee terrible and dear,—
 Swift be thy flight !

II

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
 Star-inwrought !
 Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day ; 10
 Kiss her until she be wearied out,
 Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
 Touching all with thine opiate wand—
 Come, long-sought !

III

When I arose and saw the dawn,
 I sighed for thee ;
 When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
 And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
 And the weary Day turned to his rest,
 Lingerling like an unloved guest, 20
 I sighed for thee.

IV

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
 Wouldst thou me ?
 Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
 Murmured like a noontide bee,
 Shall I nestle near thy side ?
 Wouldst thou me ?—And I replied,
 No, not thee !

V

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon—
 Sleep will come when thou art fled;
 Of neither would I ask the boon
 I ask of thee, beloved Night—
 Swift be thine approaching flight,
 Come soon, soon !

30

TIME

UNFATHOMABLE Sea ! whose waves are years,
 Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
 Are brackish with the salt of human tears !
 Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
 Claspest the limits of mortality,
 And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
 Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore ;
 Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
 Who shall put forth on thee,
 Unfathomable Sea ?

LINES

I

FAR, far away, O ye
 Halcyons of Memory,
 Seek some far calmer nest
 Than this abandoned breast !
 No news of your false spring
 To my heart's winter bring,
 Once having gone, in vain
 Ye come again.

II

Vultures, who build your bowers
 High in the Future's towers,
 Withered hopes on hopes are spread
 Dying joys, choked by the dead,
 Will serve your beaks for prey
 Many a day.

FROM THE ARABIC : AN IMITATION

I

My faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love ;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight
Bore thee far from me ;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

II

Ah ! fleetest far than fleetest storm or steed
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care ;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

TO EMILIA VIVIANI

MADONNA, wherefore hast thou sent to me
Sweet-basil and mignonette ?
Embleming love and health, which never yet
In the same wreath might be.
Alas, and they are wet !
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears ?
For never rain or dew
Such fragrance drew
From plant or flower—the very doubt endears
My sadness ever new,
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.

THE FUGITIVES

I

THE waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing,
The hoar-spray is dancing—
Away !

The whirlwind is rolling,
The thunder is tolling,
The forest is swinging,
The minster bells ringing—
Come away !

10

The Earth is like Ocean,
Wreck-strewn and in motion :
Bird, beast, man and worm
Have crept out of the storm—
Come away !

II

' Our boat has one sail,
And the helmsman is pale ;—
A bold pilot I trow,
Who should follow us now,'—
Shouted he—

20

And she cried : ' Ply the oar !
Put off gaily from shore ! '—
As she spoke, bolts of death
Mixed with hail, specked their path
O'er the sea.

And from isle, tower and rock,
The blue beacon-cloud broke,
And though dumb in the blast,
The red cannon flashed fast
From the lee.

30

III

And ' Fear'st thou ? ' and ' Fear'st thou ? '
And ' Seest thou ? ' and ' Hear'st thou ? '
And ' Drive we not free
O'er the terrible sea,
I and thou ? '

One boat-cloak did cover
The loved and the lover—
Their blood beats one measure,
They murmur proud pleasure
Soft and low ;—

40

While around the lashed Ocean,
Like mountains in motion,
Is withdrawn and uplifted,
Sunk, shattered and shifted
To and fro.

IV

In the court of the fortress
Beside the pale portress,
Like a bloodhound well beaten
The bridegroom stands, eaten
By shame ;

50

On the topmost watch-turret,
As a death-boding spirit,
Stands the gray tyrant father,
To his voice the mad weather
Seems tame ;

And with curses as wild
As e'er clung to child,
He devotes to the blast,
The best, loveliest and last
Of his name !

60

TO

MUSIC, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed ;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

SONG

I

RARELY, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight !
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night ?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

II

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again ?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false ! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

10

III

As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed ;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure ; 20
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure ;
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

V

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight !
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
And the starry night ;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born. 30

VI

I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost ;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Everything almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

VII

I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise, and good ;
Between thee and me 40
What difference ? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love—though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee—
Thou art love and life ! Oh, come,
Make once more my heart thy home.

MUTABILITY

I

THE flower that smiles to-day
 To-morrow dies :
 All that we wish to stay
 Tempts and then flies.
 What is this world's delight ?
 Lightning that mocks the night,
 Brief even as bright.

II

Virtue, how frail it is !
 Friendship how rare !
 Love, how it sells poor bliss
 For proud despair !
 But we, though soon they fall,
 Survive their joy, and all
 Which ours we call.

10

III

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
 Whilst flowers are gay.
 Whilst eyes that change ere night
 Make glad the day ;
 Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
 Dream thou—and from thy sleep
 Then wake to weep.

20

LINES WRITTEN ON HEARING THE NEWS OF
 THE DEATH OF NAPOLEON

WHAT ! alive and so bold, O Earth ?
 Art thou not overbold ?
 What ! leapest thou forth as of old
 In the light of thy morning mirth,
 The last of the flock of the starry fold ?
 Ha ! leapest thou forth as of old ?
 Are not the limbs still when the ghost is fled,
 And canst thou move, Napoleon being dead ?

How ! is not thy quick heart cold ?
 What spark is alive on thy hearth ? 10
 How ! is not *his* death-knell knolled ?
 And livest *thou* still, Mother Earth ?
 Thou wert warming thy fingers old
 O'er the embers covered and cold
 Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled—
 What, Mother, do you laugh now he is dead ?

'Who has known me of old,' replied Earth,
 'Or who has my story told ?
 It is thou who art overbold.'
 And the lightning of scorn laughed forth 20
 As she sung, 'To my bosom I fold
 All my sons when their knell is knolled,
 And so with living motion all are fed,
 And the quick spring like weeds out of the dead.

'Still alive and still bold,' shouted Earth,
 'I grow bolder and still more bold.
 The dead fill me ten thousandfold
 Fuller of speed, and splendour, and mirth.
 I was cloudy, and sullen, and cold,
 Like a frozen chaos uprolled, 30
 Till by the spirit of the mighty dead
 My heart grew warm. I feed on whom I fed.

'Ay, alive and still bold,' muttered Earth,
 'Napoleon's fierce spirit rolled,
 In terror and blood and gold,
 A torrent of ruin to death from his birth.
 Leave the millions who follow to mould
 The metal before it be cold ;
 And weave into his shame, which like the dead
 Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory fled.' 40

SONNET: POLITICAL GREATNESS

NOR happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
 Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
 Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame;
 Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
 History is but the shadow of their shame,
 Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts
 As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
 Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery
 Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
 By force or custom? Man who man would be,
 Must rule the empire of himself; in it
 Must be supreme, establishing his throne
 On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
 Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

THE AZIOLA

I

'Do you not hear the Aziola cry?
 Methinks she must be nigh,'
 Said Mary, as we sate
 In dusk, ere stars were lit, or candles brought;
 And I, who thought
 This Aziola was some tedious woman,
 Asked, 'Who is Aziola?' How elate
 I felt to know that it was nothing human,
 No mockery of myself to fear or hate:
 And Mary saw my soul, 10
 And laughed, and said, 'Disquiet yourself;
 'Tis nothing but a little downy owl.'

II

Sad Aziola! many an eventide
 Thy music I had heard
 By wood and stream, meadow and mountain-side,
 And fields and marshes wide,—

Such as nor voice, nor lute, nor wind, nor bird,
The soul ever stirred ;
Unlike and far sweeter than them all.
Sad Aziola ! from that moment I
Loved thee and thy sad cry. 20

A LAMENT

I
O WORLD ! O life ! O time !
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before ;
When will return the glory of your prime ?
No more—Oh, never more !

II
Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight ;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more !

REMEMBRANCE

I
SWIFTER far than summer's flight—
Swifter far than youth's delight—
Swifter far than happy night,
Art thou come and gone—
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
I am left lone, alone.

II
The swallow summer comes again—
The owlet night resumes her reign—
But the wild-swan youth is fain
To fly with thee, false as thou.— 10

My heart each day desires the morrow ;
 Sleep itself is turned to sorrow ;
 Vainly would my winter borrow
 Sunny leaves from any bough.

III

Lilies for a bridal bed—
 Roses for a matron's head—
 Violets for a maiden dead—
 Pansies let *my* flowers be :
 On the living grave I bear
 Scatter them without a tear—
 Let no friend, however dear,
 Waste one hope, one fear for me.

20

TO EDWARD WILLIAMS

I

THE serpent is shut out from Paradise.
 The wounded deer must seek the herb no more
 In which its heart-cure lies :
 The widowed dove must cease to haunt a bower
 Like that from which its mate with feignèd sighs
 Fled in the April hour.
 I too must seldom seek again
 Near happy friends a mitigated pain.

Of hatred I am proud,—with scorn content ;
 Indifference, that once hurt me, now is grown 10
 Itself indifferent ;
 But, not to speak of love, pity alone
 Can break a spirit already more than bent.
 The miserable one
 Turns the mind's poison into food,—
 Its medicine is tears,—its evil good.

Therefore, if now I see you seldomer,
Dear friends, dear *friend* ! know that I only fly
Your looks, because they stir
Griefs that should sleep, and hopes that cannot die :
The very comfort that they minister 21
I scarce can bear, yet I,
So deeply is the arrow gone,
Should quickly perish if it were withdrawn.

IV

When I return to my cold home, you ask
Why I am not as I have ever been.
You spoil me for the task
Of acting a forced part in life's dull scene,—
Of wearing on my brow the idle mask 30
Of author, great or mean,
In the world's carnival. I sought
Peace thus, and but in you I found it not.

V

Full half an hour, to-day, I tried my lot
With various flowers, and every one still said,
' She loves me—loves me not.'
And if this meant a vision long since fled—
If it meant fortune, fame, or peace of thought—
If it meant,—but I dread
To speak what you may know too well :
Still there was truth in the sad oracle. 40

VI

The crane o'er seas and forests seeks her home ;
No bird so wild but has its quiet nest,
When it no more would roam ;
The sleepless billows on the ocean's breast
Break like a bursting heart, and die in foam,
And thus at length find rest :
Doubtless there is a place of peace
Where *my* weak heart and all its throbs will cease.

I asked her, yesterday, if she believed
That I had resolution. One who *had* 50
Would ne'er have thus relieved
His heart with words,—but what his judgement
bade
Would do, and leave the scorner unrelieved.
These verses are too sad
To send to you, but that I know,
Happy yourself, you feel another's woe.

TO ———

I

ONE word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it ;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

II

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow ?

TO ———

I

WHEN passion's trance is overpast,
If tenderness and truth could last,
Or live, whilst all wild feelings keep
Some mortal slumber, dark and deep,
I should not weep, I should not weep !

II

It were enough to feel, to see,
Thy soft eyes gazing tenderly,
And dream the rest—and burn and be
The secret food of fires unseen,
Couldst thou but be as thou hast been.

III

After the slumber of the year
The woodland violets reappear ;
All things revive in field or grove,
And sky and sea, but two, which move
And form all others, life and love.

A BRIDAL SONG

I

THE golden gates of Sleep unbar
Where Strength and Beauty, met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather !
Night, with all thy stars look down,—
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew,—
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight ;—
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

II

Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her !

Holy stars, permit no wrong !

And return to wake the sleeper,

Dawn,—ere it be long !

O joy ! O fear ! what will be done

In the absence of the sun !

Come along !

EPITHALAMIUM

ANOTHER VERSION OF THE PRECEDING

NIGHT, with all thine eyes look down !

Darkness shed its holiest dew !

When ever smiled the inconstant moon

On a pair so true ?

Hence, coy hour ! and quench thy light,

Lest eyes see their own delight !

Hence, swift hour ! and thy loved flight

Oft renew.

Boys.

O joy ! O fear ! what may be done

In the absence of the sun ?

Come along !

The golden gates of sleep unbar !

When strength and beauty meet together,

Kindles their image like a star

In a sea of glassy weather.

Hence, coy hour ! and quench thy light,

Lest eyes see their own delight !

Hence, swift hour ! and thy loved flight

Oft renew.

Girls.

O joy ! O fear ! what may be done

In the absence of the sun ?

Come along !

Fairies ! sprites ! and angels, keep her !

Holiest powers, permit no wrong !

10

20

And return, to wake the sleeper,
 Dawn, ere it be long.
 Hence, swift hour ! and quench thy light,
 Lest eyes see their own delight !
 Hence, coy hour ! and thy loved flight
 Oft renew.

30

Boys and Girls.

O joy ! O fear ! what will be done
 In the absence of the sun ?

Come along !

GINEVRA

THE DIRGE

Old winter was gone
 In his weakness back to the mountains hoar,
 And the spring came down
 From the planet that hovers upon the shore
 Where the sea of sunlight encroaches
 On the limits of wintry night ;—
 If the land, and the air, and the sea,
 Rejoice not when spring approaches,
 We did not rejoice in thee,
 Ginevra !

10

She is still, she is cold
 On the bridal couch,
 One step to the white deathbed,
 And one to the bier,
 And one to the charnel—and one, oh where ?
 The dark arrow fled
 In the noon.

Ere the sun through heaven once more has rolled,
 The rats in her heart
 Will have made their nest,
 And the worms be alive in her golden hair,
 While the Spirit that guides the sun,
 Sits throned in his flaming chair,
 She shall sleep.

20

EVENING: PONTE AL MARE, PISA

I

THE sun is set ; the swallows are asleep ;
 The bats are flitting fast in the gray air ;
 The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
 And evening's breath, wandering here and there
 Over the quivering surface of the stream,
 Wakes not one ripple from its summer dream.

II

There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
 Nor damp within the shadow of the trees ;
 The wind is intermitting, dry, and light ;
 And in the inconstant motion of the breeze 10
 The dust and straws are driven up and down,
 And whirled about the pavement of the town.

III

Within the surface of the fleeting river
 The wrinkled image of the city lay,
 Immovably unquiet, and forever
 It trembles, but it never fades away ;
 Go to the . . .
 You, being changed, will find it then as now.

IV

The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut
 By darkest barriers of cinereous cloud, 20
 Like mountain over mountain huddled—but
 Growing and moving upwards in a crowd,
 And over it a space of watery blue,
 Which the keen evening star is shining through.

THE BOAT ON THE SERCHIO

OUR boat is asleep on Serchio's stream,
 Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,
 The helm sways idly, hither and thither ;
 Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,
 And the oars, and the sails ; but 'tis sleeping fast,
 Like a beast, unconscious of its tether.

The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
And the thin white moon lay withering there;
To tower, and cavern, and rift, and tree,
The owl and the bat fled drowsily. 10
Day had kindled the dewy woods,
And the rocks above and the stream below,
And the vapours in their multitudes,
And the Apennines' shroud of summer snow,
And clothed with light of æry gold
The mists in their eastern caves uprolled.
Day had awakened all things that be,
The lark and the thrush and the swallow free,
And the milkmaid's song and the mower's scythe,
And the matin-bell and the mountain bee: 20
Fireflies were quenched on the dewy corn,
Glow-worms went out on the river's brim,
Like lamps which a student forgets to trim:
The beetle forgot to wind his horn,
The crickets were still in the meadow and hill:
Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun
Night's dreams and terrors, every one,
Fled from the brains which are their prey
From the lamp's death to the morning ray.
All rose to do the task He set to each, 30
Who shaped us to His ends and not our own;
The million rose to learn, and one to teach
What none yet ever knew or can be known.
And many rose
Whose woe was such that fear became desire;—
Melchior and Lionel were not among those;
They from the throng of men had stepped aside,
And made their home under the green hill-side.
It was that hill, whose intervening brow
Screens Lucca from the Pisan's envious eye, 40
Which the circumfluous plain waving below,
Like a wide lake of green fertility,
With streams and fields and marshes bare,
Divides from the far Apennines—which lie
Islanded in the immeasurable air.

‘ What think you, as she lies in her green cove,
 Our little sleeping boat is dreaming of ? ’
 ‘ If morning dreams are true, why I should guess
 That she was dreaming of our idleness,
 And of the miles of watery way
 We should have led her by this time of day.’— 50

‘ Never mind,’ said Lionel,
 ‘ Give care to the winds, they can bear it well
 About yon poplar-tops ; and see
 The white clouds are driving merrily,
 And the stars we miss this morn will light
 More willingly our return to-night.—
 How it whistles, Dominic’s long black hair !
 List, my dear fellow ; the breeze blows fair :
 Hear how it sings into the air—’ 60

The chain is loosed, the sails are spread,
 The living breath is fresh behind,
 As, with dews and sunrise fed,
 Comes the laughing morning wind ;—
 The sails are full, the boat makes head
 Against the Serchio’s torrent fierce,
 Then flags with intermitting course,
 And hangs upon the wave, and stems
 The tempest of the . . . 70
 Which fervid from its mountain source
 Shallow, smooth and strong doth come,—
 Swift as fire, tempestuously
 It sweeps into the affrighted sea ;
 In morning’s smile its eddies coil,
 Its billows sparkle, toss and boil,
 Torturing all its quiet light
 Into columns fierce and bright.

The Serchio, twisting forth
 Between the marble barriers which it clove
 At Ripafratta, leads through the dread chasm 80
 The wave that died the death which lovers love,
 Living in what it sought ; as if this spasm

Had not yet passed, the toppling mountains cling,
 But the clear stream in full enthusiasm
 Pours itself on the plain, then wandering
 Down one clear path of effluence crystalline
 Sends its superfluous waves, that they may fling
 At Arno's feet tribute of corn and wine;
 Then, through the pestilential deserts wild
 Of tangled marsh and woods of stunted pine, 90
 It rushes to the Ocean.

SONNET TO BYRON

[I AM afraid these verses will not please you, but]
 If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill
 Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
 The ministration of the thoughts that fill
 The mind which, like a worm whose life may share
 A portion of the unapproachable,
 Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
 As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.
 But such is my regard that nor your power
 To soar above the heights where others [climb],
 Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
 Cast from the envious future on the time,
 Move one regret for his unhonoured name
 Who dares these words :—the worm beneath the sod
 May lift itself in homage of the God.

FRAGMENT ON KEATS

WHO DESIRED THAT ON HIS TOMB SHOULD
 BE INSCRIBED—

' HERE lieth One whose name was writ on water.'
 But, ere the breath that could erase it blew,
 Death, in remorse for that fell slaughter,
 Death, the immortalizing winter, flew
 Athwart the stream,—and time's printless torrent
 grew
 A scroll of crystal, blazoning the name
 Of Adonais !

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822

LINES: 'WHEN THE LAMP IS SHATTERED'

I

WHEN the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not ;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

II

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute :—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

III

When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest ;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed. 20
O Love ! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier ?

IV

Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high ;
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.

From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come. 30

TO JANE : THE INVITATION

BEST and brightest, come away !
Fairer far than this fair Day,
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,
Through the winter wandering,
Found, it seems, the halcyon Morn
To hoar February born. 10
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
It kissed the forehead of the Earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free,
And waked to music all their fountains,
And breathed upon the frozen mountains,
And like a prophetess of May
Strewed flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear. 20

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs—
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.
I leave this notice on my door
For each accustomed visitor :— 30
‘ I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields ;—

Reflection, you may come to-morrow,
 Sit by the fireside with Sorrow.—
 You with the unpaid bill, De-pair,—
 You, tiresome verse-reciter, Care,—
 I will pay you in the grave,—
 Death will listen to your stave.
 Expectation too, be off !
 To-day is for itself enough ;
 Hope, in pity mock not Woe
 With smiles, nor follow where I go ;
 Long having lived on thy sweet food,
 At length I find one moment's good
 After long pain—with all your love,
 This you never told me of.'

40

Radiant Sister of the Day,
 Awake ! arise ! and come away !
 To the wild woods and the plains,
 And the pools where winter rains
 Image all their roof of leaves,
 Where the pine its garland weaves
 Of sapless green and ivy dun
 Round stems that never kiss the sun ;
 Where the lawns and pastures be,
 And the sandhills of the sea ;—
 Where the melting hoar-frost wets
 The daisy-star that never sets,
 And wind-flowers, and violets,
 Which yet join not scent to hue,
 Crown the pale year weak and new ;
 When the night is left behind
 In the deep east, dun and blind,
 And the blue noon is over us,
 And the multitudinous
 Billows murmur at our feet,
 Where the earth and ocean meet,
 And all things seem only one
 In the universal sun.

50

60

TO JANE: THE RECOLLECTION

I

Now the last day of many days,
 All beautiful and bright as thou,
 The lovehest and the last, is dead,
 Rise, Memory, and write its praise !
 Up,—to thy wonted work ! come, trace
 The epitaph of glory fled,—
 For now the Earth has changed its face,
 A frown is on the Heaven's brow.

II

We wandered to the Pine Forest
 That skirts the Ocean's foam, 10
 The lightest wind was in its nest,
 The tempest in its home.
 The whispering waves were half asleep,
 The clouds were gone to play,
 And on the bosom of the deep
 The smile of Heaven lay ;
 It seemed as if the hour were one
 Sent from beyond the skies,
 Which scattered from above the sun
 A light of Paradise. 20

III

We paused amid the pines that stood
 The giants of the waste,
 Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
 As serpents interlaced,
 And soothed by every azure breath,
 That under Heaven is blown,
 To harmonies and hues beneath,
 As tender as its own ;
 Now all the tree-tops lay asleep,
 Like green waves on the sea, 30
 As still as in the silent deep
 The ocean woods may be.

IV

How calm it was !—the silence there
 By such a chain was bound
 That even the busy woodpecker
 Made stiller by her sound
 The inviolable quietness ;
 The breath of peace we drew
 With its soft motion made not less
 The calm that round us grew. 40
 There seemed from the remotest seat
 Of the white mountain waste,
 To the soft flower beneath our feet,
 A magic circle traced,—
 A spirit interfused around,
 A thrilling, silent life,—
 To momentary peace it bound
 Our mortal nature's strife ;
 And still I felt the centre of
 The magic circle there 50
 Was one fair form that filled with love
 The lifeless atmosphere.

V

We paused beside the pools that lie
 Under the forest bough,—
 Each seemed as 'twere a little sky
 Gulfed in a world below ;
 A firmament of purple light
 Which in the dark earth lay,
 More boundless than the depth of night,
 And purer than the day— 60
 In which the lovely forests grew,
 As in the upper air,
 More perfect both in shape and hue
 Than any spreading there.
 There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,
 And through the dark green wood
 The white sun twinkling like the dawn
 Out of a speckled cloud.

TO JANE: THE RECOLLECTION 463

Sweet views which in our world above
 Can never well be seen, 70
 Were imaged by the water's love
 Of that fair forest green.
 And all was interfused beneath
 With an Elysian glow,
 An atmosphere without a breath,
 A softer day below.
 Like one beloved the scene had lent
 To the dark water's breast,
 Its every leaf and lineament
 With more than truth expressed ; 80
 Until an envious wind crept by,
 Like an unwelcome thought,
 Which from the mind's too faithful eye
 Blots one dear image out.
 Though thou art ever fair and kind,
 The forests ever green,
 Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
 Than calm in waters, seen.

WITH A GUITAR, TO JANE

ARIEL to Miranda :—Take
 This slave of Music, for the sake
 Of him who is the slave of thee,
 And teach it all the harmony
 In which thou canst, and only thou,
 Make the delighted spirit glow,
 Till joy denies itself again,
 And, too intense, is turned to pain ;
 For by permission and command
 Of thine own Prince Ferdinand, 10
 Poor Ariel sends this silent token
 Of more than ever can be spoken ;
 Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who,
 From life to life, must still pursue
 Your happiness ;—for thus alone
 Can Ariel ever find his own.

From Prospero's enchanted cell,
As the mighty verses tell,
To the throne of Naples, he
Lit you o'er the trackless sea, 20
Flitting on, your prow before,
Like a living meteor.
When you die, the silent Moon,
In her interlunar swoon,
Is not sadder in her cell
Than deserted Ariel.
When you live again on earth,
Like an unseen star of birth,
Ariel guides you o'er the sea
Of life from your nativity. 30
Many changes have been run
Since Ferdinand and you begun
Your course of love, and Ariel still
Has tracked your steps, and served your will ;
Now, in humbler, happier lot,
This is all remembered not ;
And now, alas ! the poor sprite is
Imprisoned, for some fault of his,
In a body like a grave ;—
From you he only dares to crave, 40
For his service and his sorrow,
A smile to-day, a song to-morrow.

The artist who this idol wrought,
To echo all harmonious thought,
Felled a tree, while on the steep
The woods were in their winter sleep,
Rocked in that repose divine
On the wind-swept Apennine ;
And dreaming, some of Autumn past,
And some of Spring approaching fast, 50
And some of April buds and showers,
And some of songs in July bowers,
And all of love ; and so this tree,—
O that such our death may be !—

Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again :
From which, beneath Heaven's fairest star,
The artist wrought this loved Guitar,
And taught it justly to reply,
To all who question skillfully, 60
In language gentle as thine own ;
Whispering in enamoured tone
Sweet oracles of woods and dells,
And summer winds in sylvan cells ;
For it had learned all harmonies
Of the plains and of the skies,
Of the forests and the mountains,
And the many-voicèd fountains ;
The clearest echoes of the hills,
The softest notes of falling rills, 70
The melodies of birds and bees,
The murmuring of summer seas,
And pattering rain, and breathing dew,
And airs of evening ; and it knew
That seldom-heard mysterious sound,
Which, driven on its diurnal round,
As it floats through boundless day,
Our world enkindles on its way.—
All this it knows, but will not tell
To those who cannot question well 80
The Spirit that inhabits it ;
It talks according to the wit
Of its companions ; and no more
Is heard than has been felt before,
By those who tempt it to betray
These secrets of an elder day :
But, sweetly as its answers will
Flatter hands of perfect skill,
It keeps its highest, holiest tone
For our belovèd Jane alone. 90

TO JANE : ' THE KEEN STARS WERE
TWINKLING '

I

THE keen stars were twinkling,
And the fair moon was rising among them,
Dear Jane !
The guitar was tinkling,
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them
Again.

II

As the moon's soft splendour
O'er the faint cold starlight of Heaven
Is thrown,
So your voice most tender 10
To the strings without soul had then given
Its own.

III

The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,
To-night ;
No leaf will be shaken
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter
Delight.

IV

Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with your dear voice revealing 20
A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one.

A DIRGE

ROUGH wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song ;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long ;

Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main,—
Wail, for the world's wrong !

LINES WRITTEN IN THE BAY OF LERICI

SHE left me at the silent time
When the moon had ceased to climb
The azure path of Heaven's steep,
And like an albatross asleep,
Balanced on her wings of light,
Hovered in the purple night,
Ere she sought her ocean nest
In the chambers of the West.
She left me, and I stayed alone
Thinking over every tone 10
Which, though silent to the ear,
The enchanted heart could hear,
Like notes which die when born, but still
Haunt the echoes of the hill ;
And feeling ever—oh, too much !—
The soft vibration of her touch,
As if her gentle hand, even now,
Lightly trembled on my brow ;
And thus, although she absent were,
Memory gave me all of her 20
That even Fancy dares to claim :—
Her presence had made weak and tame
All passions, and I lived alone
In the time which is our own ;
The past and future were forgot,
As they had been, and would be, not.
But soon, the guardian angel gone,
The daemon reassumed his throne
In my faint heart. I dare not speak
My thoughts, but thus disturbed and weak 30
I sat and saw the vessels glide
Over the ocean bright and wide,

Like spirit-wingèd chariots sent
 O'er some serenest element
 For ministrations strange and far
 As if to some Elysian star
 Sailed for drink to medicine
 Such sweet and bitter pain as mine.
 And the wind that winged their flight
 From the land came fresh and light, 40
 And the scent of wingèd flowers,
 And the coolness of the hours
 Of dew, and sweet warmth left by day,
 Were scattered o'er the twinkling bay.
 And the fisher with his lamp
 And spear about the low rocks damp
 Crept, and struck the fish which came
 To worship the delusive flame.
 Too happy they, whose pleasure sought
 Extinguishes all sense and thought 50
 Of the regret that pleasure leaves,
 Destroying life alone, not peace !

LINES: 'WE MEET NOT AS WE PARTED'

I

WE meet not as we parted,
 We feel more than all may see ;
 My bosom is heavy-hearted,
 And thine full of doubt for me :—
 One moment has bound the free.

II

That moment is gone for ever,
 Like lightning that flashed and died—
 Like a snowflake upon the river—
 Like a sunbeam upon the tide,
 Which the dark shadows hide.

III

That moment from time was singled
As the first of a life of pain ;
The cup of its joy was mingled
—Delusion too sweet though vain !
Too sweet to be mine again.

IV

Sweet lips, could my heart have hidden
That its life was crushed by you,
Ye would not have then forbidden
The death which a heart so true
Sought in your briny dew.

THE ISLE

THERE was a little lawny islet
By anemone and violet,
Like mosaic, paven :
And its roof was flowers and leaves
Which the summer's breath enweaves,
Where nor sun nor showers nor breeze
Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
Each a gem engraven ;—
Girt by many an azure wave
With which the clouds and mountains pave
A lake's blue chasm.

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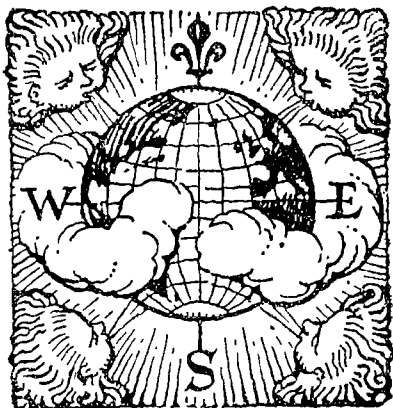
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January 1936

